

Changing or Being Changed

Sunday, August 1, 2021

KEY TEXT:

Romans 12:2 (ESV)

2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Are we **CHANGING** (conforming more and more to the things of this world) or **are we BEING CHANGED** by the power of God?

Each week we have taken time to remind ourselves of the Scriptures in God's Word that warn us not to conform to this world

Exodus 22:31; 23:2

31 “You are to be my holy people.

2 “Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong.

2 Corinthians 6:14-17

14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? **15** What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? **16** What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.” **17** Therefore “Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

Leviticus 11:45

45 I am the Lord, who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.

1 Peter 1:14-16

14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. **15** But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; **16** for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”

We said that rather than **CHANGING** (conforming) to be like the world, we want to **BE CHANGED** (transformed by the power of God).

However, we cannot do this on our own, though. It takes God working in us to make these changes

1 Samuel 10:6

6 The Spirit of the Lord will come powerfully upon you...**and you will be changed into a different person.**

Another key scripture for us has been Paul's description of the Corinthian believers. How their lives had been changed by God and how he wanted them to continue to honor God by living out those changes in their everyday lives

1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 19

9 Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men **10** nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. **11 And that is what some of you were.** But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

19 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; **20** you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

We have discussed having...

- **A CHANGED LIFE** - *Mary Magdalene*
- **CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCES** – *A Demon possessed boy and his father*
- **A CHANGED FUTURE** – *The Demoniak of Gadara*
- **A CHANGED DESTINY** - *Lazarus*
- **CHANGED DIRECTION** - *Jonah*
- **A CHANGED WALK** - *Jacob*
- **CHANGED VALUES**
- **CHANGED PRIORITIES**

Two weeks ago, we said that... So often when we think about change, we think of it in terms of an event. And while change can happen in a moment so much of it takes time and is an ongoing work in our lives. It would be better for us to think of change as being initiated by an event but one that we allow to continue to form and shape us. In spiritual terms we call this **the Process of Sanctification**. (Which in simple terms is the action of being purified from sin and being made holy)

We need to realize that change in either direction is an ongoing process. Thus, the reason for the title to this series... CHANGING or BEING CHANGED. Both are ongoing. I am either CHANGING (conforming becoming more like the world) or BEING CHANGED (being transformed - Sanctified by my relationship with God and becoming more like Him)

We discussed some areas in which the necessity of the ongoing process of change is even more evident.

Ephesians 4:17-19

17 So I tell you this, and **insist on it in the Lord**, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their **thinking**. **18** They are darkened in their **understanding** and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their **hearts**. **19** Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

Changed THINKING

Paul Tells us that it is important for our THINKING to be changed

Isaiah 55:7-9

7 Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. **8** “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. **9** “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Changed UNDERSTANDING - Nicodemus

Paul told the Ephesians that the Gentiles (those who were not saved) **Ephesians 4:17-19**

17 So I tell you this, and **insist on it in the Lord**, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their **thinking**. **18** They are darkened in their **understanding** and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their **hearts**. **19** Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.
were darkened in their understanding.

Proverbs 18:2

2 Fools find no pleasure in understanding but delight in airing their own opinions.

A changed understanding begins with changed thinking. **Thinking speaks of our thoughts, what we allow into our minds. Understanding speaks of comprehension.** Changing our understanding will take time. Somethings we will just have to accept by faith until God builds our knowledge and understanding.

Proverbs 3:5

5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;

Nicodemus struggled to have his understanding changed.

John 3:1-10

3 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. **2** He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

3 Jesus replied, “**Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.**”

4 “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

5 Jesus answered, “**Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. 6** Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. **7** You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ **8** The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

9 “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

10 “**You are Israel’s teacher,**” said Jesus, “**and do you not understand these things?**”

We believe that Understanding did change because later on Nicodemus defended Jesus in the Sanhedrin and was scolded for it. Then after Jesus was crucified, we see him accompany Joseph of Arimathea as he helped prepare and bury the body of Jesus.

John tells us that Joseph was a secret disciple of Jesus because he feared the Jewish leaders, so we can only assume that Nicodemus finally got it and came to an understanding of who Jesus was. His understanding had been CHANGED

Psalm 119:32

32 I run in the path of your commands, for you have broadened my understanding.

Oh, that we would have a changed UNDERSTANDING and begin to comprehend the truths of God's ways (They would make sense)... But don't forget this is an ongoing process

Changed MIND

As our thinking and understanding are changed, our Mind is renewed.

Ephesians 4:21-24

21 when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Romans 8:5-6

5 Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.

Today I want to continue by highlighting three more ongoing changes that God wants to make in our lives

Changed CHOICES - *Prodigal Son*

Along with changed thinking, understanding and mind comes the ability to make Changed CHOICES. It's a longer passage, but let's see how all of these ongoing changes are reflected in the parable of the Prodigal Son

Luke 15:11-32

The Parable of the Lost Son

11 Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. **12** The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

13 "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. (HE MADE BAD

CHOICES) **14** After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. **15** So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. **16** He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. (STILL MAKING WRONG CHOICES)

17 “When he came to his senses, (STARTED TO CHANGE HIS THINKING) he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! **18** I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. **19** I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ **20** So he got up and went to his father. (HIS UNDERSTANDING AND MIND WERE BEGINNING TO CHANGE TOO AND HE BEGAN MAKING DIFFERENT CHOICES)

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

21 “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ (HIS UNDERSTANDING WAS ABOUT TO BE CHANGED SOME MORE)

22 “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. **23** Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. **24** For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate. (IN RESTORED RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS FATHER, HIS THINKING, UNDERSTANDING, MIND AND CHOICES WOULD CONTINUE TO CHANGE AS HE STAYED IN FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER)

It seems to me that what is happening in the world today reflects the exact opposite of the changes we have been talking about. That rather than have their thinking, understanding, mind and choices changed by God, people are conforming to the thinking understanding, mindset and choices that the World is making

Changed ATTITUDE – *The Older Brother*

25 “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. **26** So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. **27** ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

28 “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. **29** But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving

for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. **30** But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

31 “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. **32** But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

The older brother reveals yet another changed that God may need to make in us. Our ATTITUDE. The older brother had stayed in relationship with the father. He had made good choices, but his attitude was out of alignment with the father. Sometimes our attitude reflects more of the thinking, understanding, mind and choices of the world. God needs to refresh us and give us his attitude.

Ephesians 4:23, NLT ...let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.

Ephesians 4:32, ESV [Be kind to one another](#), tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Once upon a time a woman woke up one morning, looked in the mirror, and saw that she had only three hairs on her head. "Well," she said, "I think that today I might braid my hair." And she did and she had a great day. The next morning, she woke up, checked herself in the mirror and discovered that she only had two hairs on her head. "Hmm," she said, "Maybe I'll part my hair down the middle today." So she did and she had a fantastic day. The next morning, she woke up, looked in the mirror and found that she had only one hair left on her head. "Well," she said, "Not to worry. Today I'll wear my hair in a ponytail." So she did and she had the best day. The next day she woke up, looked in the mirror and noticed that there wasn't one single hair on her head. "Hooray!" she exclaimed. "I don't have to do my hair today!"

Every day, an old man sat in his rocking chair with his granddaughter outside a petrol station, greeting tourists who passed through their town. One day, a man who seemed to be looking for somewhere to live asked, "So what sort of town is this?" "What sort of town do you come from?" the old man replied. The tourist answered, "Everyone criticizes everyone. It's really bad." "That's just the way it is here," said the old man. A few days later, another man asked, "So what sort of town is this?" "What sort of town do you come from?" the old man replied again. The tourist answered, "It's great. Everyone gets along so well." "That's just the way it is here," said the old man. After the man left, the granddaughter said, "How come you told the first guy this was a bad place to live, and the second guy this is a great place to live?" "Because wherever you go, you take your attitude with you, and that's what makes it good or bad."

Your attitude is what makes all the difference. If you have a bad attitude, ask God to change it today!

CHANGED HEART – *Jonah, James & John*

I want to take one more step in this process of ongoing change. Our thinking, understanding, mind, choices, and attitude are reflections of our HEARTS. Our hearts need to be changed by God.

Ezekiel 36:26-27

²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

This speaks of the same change that we read about in 1 Samuel

1 Samuel 10:6

6 The Spirit of the Lord will come powerfully upon you...and you will be changed into a different person.

What would happen if our whole heart could be changed? I believe it can...

When I think about a changed heart, two sets of characters come to mind...

The first we looked at early on when we talked about a CHANGED DIRECTION. Jonah needed a course correction and he got one. Instead of running away from Nineveh he went there and did what God had told him to do – albeit reluctantly and without a changed heart

Jonah 3:3-4

³ Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. ⁴ Jonah began by going a day's journey into the city, proclaiming, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown."

The people repented; the city was saved; but Jonah was not happy

Jonah 4

4 But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. ² He prayed to the LORD, "Isn't this what I said, LORD, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger

and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. ³ Now, LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.”

⁴ But the LORD replied, “Is it right for you to be angry?”

⁵ Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. ⁶ Then the LORD God provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant. ⁷ But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. ⁸ When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah’s head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, “It would be better for me to die than to live.”

⁹ But God said to Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?”

“It is,” he said. “And I’m so angry I wish I were dead.”

¹⁰ But the LORD said, “You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. ¹¹ And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?”

And that is how the book of Jonah ends. We don’t know if Jonah’s heart ever changed and maybe that’s the point, to get us to consider our own need for a changed heart. Jonah knew what the heart of God was (4:2) as he well describes it in verse 2; but he was struggling allowing God to change his own heart.

The second set of characters is found in the New Testament.

Mark 3:17

¹⁷ James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means “sons of thunder”),

While we don’t know for sure why Jesus gave them this nickname, another passage gives us a possible clue

Luke 9:51-55

⁵¹ As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. ⁵² And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; ⁵³ but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you

want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them^[a]?”⁵⁵ But Jesus turned and rebuked them.

There were other incidents as well that indicated that James and John lacked the heart of Jesus and yet they were obviously changed and given a new heart. One that understood the Love, grace, and compassion of God. Both, along with Peter were three of the most intimate disciples with Jesus, often being allowed to accompany him where the others were not. James was the first of the disciples to be martyred for the faith. And John, John wrote more about God's love than any other New Testament Writer.

John 3:16

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Do your choices need to change? What about your Attitude? Does God need to change your heart?

He can and He will