

# Change

Jack Elder

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People hate change—they just hate it. As we get older, the harder it is to change. Mess with an old person's routine and watch what happens. Give a person—especially an old person—a new phone with a million apps on it that they can't figure out. We've had an experience recently with a new TV with a new TV remote and are trying to adjust and change to that. People just naturally resist change. Sometimes they literally despise and hate change—they just don't want to change.

Before I thought about the subject, I didn't think it was that big of a deal or that big of a problem, but it really is. I did a [Google](#) search on it because you can get a pretty good education from [Google](#), but you have to be careful about what you're learning. I did run across all kinds of lists. [Psychology Today](#) has a long list of all the reasons people resist and hate change and what you can do about it. Of course, people who have employees—managers—they're concerned about change. All you have to do to rattle a department is have a big staff meeting or a department meeting and tell your folks that something has to change and there is tension—you can cut it with a knife in the room. I've been there and seen that. Here is a list of what the experts generally agree on.

The first one on why we resist or don't like change is:

*Habits.* We are comfortable with the things that we habitually do. We are just set in our ways.

*Fear.* Fear of the unknown. Something new and different. I just don't like it. It's different.

*Our way of doing things.* Another reason is, whatever we've been doing, we think that is the best way to do it. So, we don't want to mess with it; we don't want to change it.

To go along with that, some people—I know I can speak for my personality type—I like the way I do things and "*if it isn't broke, don't fix it*". I tell my wife that all the time. That's a pretty short list.

We know as God's people we are called to change in a spiritual sense and we know that. Let's look at a handful of scriptures that we all know. 2 Corinthians 5:14-17. I'll read this one out of the [New Living Translation](#). The context is, Paul has had a lot of issues with Corinthians and we'll talk more about that later. If you go back in the context, he's trying to convince the Corinthians that they're not crazy. That he is not crazy, the ministry is not crazy, even if they think they are. He's trying to get the point across that everything they do is for their benefit. They aren't doing it because they are a bunch of nuts or something.

**2 Corinthians 5:14** *Either way, Christ's love controls us.[c] Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life.*

15) *He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them. (NLT)*

There is a clear implication there of a life change.

16) *So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! (NLT)*

We changed our thinking. I think almost every one of us had a worldview of Jesus and we have changed that considerably.

17) *This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! (NLT)*

That's pretty clear. That involves change. Let's go over to Ephesians 4, again from the New Living. Breaking in on the context.

**Ephesians 4:17** *With the Lord's authority I say this: Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for they are hopelessly confused.*

18) *Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him.*

19) *They have no sense of shame. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity. (NLT)*

Doesn't that ring a bell for us in our modern society. Human nature never changes. Solomon said there is nothing new under the sun and as far as human nature goes, you can look through history and see that same thing.

20) *But that isn't what you learned about Christ.*

21) *Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him,*

22) *Throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. (NLT)*

You have to think of Galatians 5 where it talks about the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit.

23) *Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.*

24) *Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy. (NLT)*

New nature—we know that's a change from the old self. Let's go to Romans 12:1-2. The famous scripture—we've probably read it and heard it thousands of times. Again, from the New Living.

**Romans 12:1** *And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.*

That's talking about willingly giving up the old self—the old nature.

2) *Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.* (NLT)

Granted, if you do a word study, you won't find the word change in the Greek. It's just not there. Maybe in some translations—I didn't look at all of them. I have 20 plus translations, but what you do find is the word *new*, *renew*, and *transform*. They all mean the same thing. The *new* from Strong's is a derivative of Strong's index #303 and is #2537 which means "to renovate, to renew". That's what it means. That's easy to understand. To change something from one thing to another. The Word Study Dictionary, using a reference out of Revelation 21:5 where the Father says, *I make all things new*—same word—is metaphorically speaking of Christians who are "renewed", changed from evil to good, by the Spirit of God. Then we have scripture references for that. It's a *renewed* heart, a *transformed* heart, it's different.

Then *transform*, that comes from #3326 and #3445, is a construct of those. We've heard this before many times in the past, if you think about it and it literally or figuratively means "metamorphosis". We change, we transfigure or transform something. What it means is—we've heard the analogy years ago—a butterfly comes from a caterpillar. We morph and when you morph something you change it from one state to another. It's kind of like—I have to think of Galatians 5 where you have the list of the works of the flesh and the fruit of God's Holy Spirit. There's a transition and if you think about that—it even mentions it in Titus—that we used to be a certain way but we changed that. We are in the process of trying to change our whole lives, that's what we are called for. If you look at the *works of the flesh* and the *fruit of God's Holy Spirit*, there is a big gap and we are somewhere in that transition as we work through life. At least to my logic, that's the way it looks to me. Any way you want to slice those scriptures, it's pretty clear, we are called to change. In that process we know that we have to rely on and look to the Father and look to Jesus for their Holy Spirit to empower us to do the change. We can't do that by ourselves. By the way, that list of trying to show that we do need to change, that's a pretty short list. We have a whole Bible full that shows us that. I know we know that.

Think about Paul's writing, let's back up and see if we can pick up a thread. Let's go back to Romans 10. There is a phrase that Paul uses that says, *it's my heart's desire*. That's in Romans 10:1-4. He says that in verse 1. This is from the New King James.

**Romans 10:1** *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. (NKJV)*

Looking historically at the Roman church, it's a mixed church. It's about 50% Jews and 50% Gentiles—a mixture of people.

*2) For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.*

*3) For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. (NKJV)*

Speaking of Israelites historically and in this day—*their own righteousness*. That idea of their own righteousness was wrapped up in strict law keeping. That was demonstrated in Paul's time and in Christ's time, by the Pharisees and the Scribes. They comprised a whole list of "do's and don'ts". The thought that if you do things a certain way, then God owes you salvation. He owes you that because of your acts of obedience or your contrived acts of obedience.

*4) For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (NKJV)*

Certain religious persuasions would read,

*"See, the law is done away. Belief is all that is needed for salvation.*

I remember a gentleman—about 25-30 years ago—who got interested in the church. He got the literature and was studying the Bible and thought he needed to be baptized—first step. So he went to some place that specializes in that. He got baptized. When he came up out of the water, he asked whoever dunked him, what do I do now? He said, nothing—you're saved already. Do whatever you want—that's what they told him. He at least knew, being ignorant as he was about the church, that wasn't right. We know Paul didn't remotely imply anything like that.

What verse 4 is really saying is that Christ was the end of the law—it means He lived it and demonstrated God's righteousness by the way He lives. It was far more than just an outward keeping of the law. It involves a change from the inside—the inner man if you will. A change in man's heart. Based on right knowledge and striving after God's righteousness. Not something man can do. Paul knew that his fellow Israelites at that time didn't have true knowledge but that they would someday. He was so emotionally invested in wanting to help people and wanting to give God's truth—he wanted it for everybody. He did know that those who are called now—the Ecclesia, the called-out ones—who responded to that calling—we've been baptized, we've repented, we're in the process of conversion—he knew we could be worked with. You can see that in his writings as they were for the various churches. He knew his job description was to encourage, admonish, correct, and help. We see that in his dealings with all the

churches. He knew he could work with spiritual Israel then. God didn't give him the power or authority to do anything with the physical Israelites. But he had a hope and real desire to achieve that with God's people.

That change is from the inside. It's a change of heart and not some outward action that we can do. You think about the fact that we observe God's Holy Days and what is the very first one? It's the Passover. Getting sin out and there's a couple of things we learn right off the bat, even when we are new. God's showing us how insidious sin/leaven is; using that to picture that sin and showing that we have that in our lives. That's what we came out of, supposedly. If we are human, it's there—we have it. That's what we learn. The second thing we know from Passover, in getting the leaven out, that God's want that in our lives—He wants us to get that out of our lives. It's a simple analogy. He wants that out of our lives because He knows it separates us from Him. That's why He wants it out. That involves changing something, either small or great. It doesn't matter, just something that we change. The things we start changing in our lives with God's help—with His Holy Spirit, which God gives us at baptism. Christ used Paul and all the apostles to express that desire that He had. Encourage, admonish—He wanted spiritual growth and maturity. It says that, grow up in Christ—that's talking about spiritual maturity.

Let's look at three points in that process of growing, maturing, and changing our inner self. I'll give you the three points right up front.

**1. Respond to God's admonishment to change.**

God tells us—gives us what we need to change.

**2. Ask God for wisdom to change.**

**3. Rely on God for that change.**

Not something we can generate up for ourselves.

**1. Respond to God's admonishment to change.**

God gives us what we need to change but we have to respond to it. Turn to 2 Corinthians, we'll look a bit more at Paul's writings. In 2 Corinthians 6, Paul is making an emotional appeal because he is anxious about his previous strong correction towards them. He had to scold them, to correct them. That's referring to that incestuous relationship that we see in 1 Corinthians 5. When you look, most commentators will say that the two Epistles—the two letters to the Corinthians—are the strongest correction in the entire New Testament. Like I've said before we can be thankful for that. They had so many problems and issues. We wouldn't know a lot of the stuff we know now if it wasn't for Paul working with them and correcting them. Plus, they had their share of other problems just as a church. Doesn't take much reading between the lines to see that; to see it was a pretty dysfunctional church in Corinth. They had splits, they were polarizing

around personalities and ideas, when they came together Paul said it wasn't for the better, it was for the worse. No growth—they were mistreating each other. They had problems showing up at the Passover. Paul told them people showing up to Passover drunk. Paul said, *"If you want to be drunks, be drunk at home, don't shame the church."* He was pretty strong with them.

In another place Paul just accused them of being immature spiritually. In a lot of cases, they weren't acting like they were converted at all. He told them that he couldn't even talk to them as mature Christians. Everything was backwards. They weren't making any gains and they had a whole myriad of other problems. Culturally, the historians tell us Corinth was a pretty large city and everything was on trade routes through that part of the world. But it wasn't a lot different culturally from our society today. They were prosperous commercially; they had a good economy. Probably towards the end, just like everything in the Roman Empire, it faded in the end. Reminds us of where we are going maybe—I don't know. They had abundant idolatry. It's always around, isn't it? Look at Ancient Israel—Sabbath breaking, they disobeyed God and idolatry; the same problems. Probably why Satan uses that so much. Just stick something between you and God and it gets them every time. In that society too, there was a lot of appeal to look to philosophy for the answers to everything—Greek philosophy.

I remember a good sermon years ago—I can't remember the minister's name. He must have worked hours and hours on that sermon; he did a good job. He showed how all western society has been influenced by Greek philosophy and he laid it out. I can't find that anywhere. Maybe somebody out there has it. They had entertainment—look at the entertainment they had. You think of the Coliseum; Paul said he fought with beasts. We have that in our entertainment today through Hollywood—blood and guts. The point being, all of this had a heavy influence on that population including the church just like today. It's all counter to God's principles and His morals. Very much like the distractions we have.

In the context here Paul quotes a lot of Old Testament scriptures—that's what he had to teach them from obviously. He tried to show them what they needed to change. He corrected them. The thing about when he corrected them, his correction didn't originate with him. Jesus said over in Matthew 28 to make disciples of all nations, teach them what I've taught you and so forth.

**2 Corinthians 6:14** *Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness?* (NKJV)

A lot of different ways you could address that, but basically don't have fellowship with false teachers. There are people who say you don't have to keep God's laws.

*14 continued) ... And what communion has light with darkness?*

*15) And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?* (NKJV)

Opposites there—light and darkness, believer and unbeliever.

*16) And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." (NKJV)*

If you have a margin like my New King James, you might see Ezekiel 37, Exodus 29—I'm just mentioning the chapters—Leviticus 26, Jeremiah 31, and Zechariah 8. You'll find those references to those words.

*17) Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." (NKJV)*

You find those in Isaiah 52:11 and Revelation 18:4. Paul quoted a whole bunch of scriptures. He taught them and said you know these things and have the right knowledge and it's interesting the reference to Ezekiel 37, if you look at that, what does it talk about? The Kingdom of God and that's what he is telling the Corinthians about. That's your goal, not all this other stuff you're having so much trouble with—the bickering, the infighting, the competition among yourselves. He's telling them you have access to God's Kingdom, why would you want anything else?

*18) I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty. (NKJV)*

That comes right out of Isaiah 43:6 and Hosea 1:10. You have to appreciate that Paul's quoting God's words, not his own. He's not coming up with this by himself. Let's go to 2 Corinthians 7, continuing in the New King James.

**2 Corinthians 7:1** *Therefore [reviewing what he just said in chapter 6], having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit ... (NKJV)*

What we need to change, to cleanse and change physically are the sins of the flesh—you have their reference in Galatians 5. The change in our mind—the things that are ungodly in our mind. Those thoughts and motives—what we really do. We need to change those things with God's help.

*1 continued) ... perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (NKJV)*

We understand perfectly that *perfecting holiness* means "set apart"—different from our old man, apart from God. Just as a reference, back in 1 Corinthians 6—you don't need to turn there—it says, as a reminder of what Paul told us, "*You were bought for a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's*". That just emphasizes the seriousness of glorifying and honoring God in our lives. It only comes by the perfecting process. Changing our basic nature, again with God's help. We can't do it on our own. Some people try that. They think, if I do this or that, or one thing or

another in a certain way, God has to forgive me—I've heard people say that—but we know that's not true. Continuing in 1 Corinthians 7:8.

*8) For even if I made you sorry with my letter [he's referring to the first Epistle], I do not regret it; though I did regret it. (NKJV)*

Almost a contradiction but what he's saying is it bothered him on two fronts. One, he had to do it—he didn't really want to do it, but he had to do it. He felt partly responsible for their lack of spiritual maturity. He felt that.

*8 continued) ... For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while.*

*9) Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner ... (NKJV)*

That's what repentance means; they did a 180—they saw their error and they responded; they changed in other words.

*9 continued) ... that you might suffer loss from us in nothing.*

*10) For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. (NKJV)*

That's talking about salvation versus the remorse of, "I got caught", which we do humanly.

*11) For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you ... (NKJV)*

In other words, they took the admonishment to heart and changed. They changed their attitude. They had an attitude of indifference towards the sin that was happening in the church.

*11 continued) ... what clearing of yourselves, what indignation ... (NKJV)*

The indignation was with themselves and the upset, because they allowed the problem to go on for so long. Paul had to come along and clean it up for them, help them, give them a push in the right direction to clean it up. That *clearing*—when you think about it—was probably them stopping excusing themselves.

*11 continued) ... what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter. (NKJV)*

The whole point is that they were corrected, they paid attention, they responded to Paul's admonishment—at least in this case. There are a whole lot of lessons for us today. Because we have the knowledge, we have everything that we need. The point holds the same for us. We have what we need to make the changes with God's help. I



remember years ago I was listening to one of those financial talk shows—this was before podcasts and vlogging that goes on now. You listened to it on the radio. A man called in and he was worried about the value of his property. The value of his property was that he paid millions for it in LA and he was worried about depreciation because he paid millions for it and he only had \$20 million left for his retirement. You could just see the host fuming on the inside. He said, what are you worried about? You know how many people retire with \$20 million. The point was, he had everything he needed and he was still worried.

## **2. Ask God for the wisdom to change.**

Just like those Corinthians were corrected and they changed their attitude and how they conducted themselves, we should do the same. We just need a little extra help; we need that wisdom from God. Let's go to Titus. In Titus 3:8 in the New King James.

**Titus 3:8** *This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works.* (NKJV)

That's talking about how we conduct ourselves as Christians. He said to be careful, pay attention, and concentrate about what we're doing.

*8 continued) ... These things are good and profitable to men.* (NKJV)

*Profitable* means “to be useful or valuable”, in a spiritual sense of course, to God. In other words, we honor and glorify God and Jesus in what we are doing, wherever we are at in life. It talks about conduct and we are all in a learning process. Everybody is in a different place. Just as an example I thought of in the learning process—have you ever just done something and it turns out right? A good example is anger. Anger is probably one of the most common carnal reactions we can have. If we get angry about something, we want to get even over something—some offense or something like that. Like Gordon mentioned, when we were younger, we were a lot more volatile than we are now. Peter was that way—he was pretty brash. He'd bristle at just about anything. It's harder to control because it's such a powerful emotion. That's probably why Satan uses it so effectively against us. When you think about it, anger and hatred are kind of blood brothers so to speak. The anger, the hatred, makes us do irrational things—bad reactions. One of the fastest rising crimes around is road rage. More and more of it all the time. It's anger—people can't control their anger. They have meltdowns.

Here, Paul says to the Corinthians, he is afraid they would resent the correction that he gave them and they would get angry and be estranged from him. He didn't want that—he wanted to keep that connection. We know God tells us that with our emotions, we are supposed to keep them reined in. It tells us that in other places. We shouldn't do the things that we used to do or react the way we used to. When that anger pops up, dial it down. Keep it in control. So, we do occasionally. Getting to the point when you do

something right, what do you know when you do that? It turns out better and nobody gets killed. In other words, it works to be angry and sin not. When we do it right, it helps.

The point is, if we just keep applying what we do need—these principles—sometimes we fail and sometimes we succeed in these things and it takes perseverance to keep doing it. Pretty soon it becomes a part of it and eventually we get it all right. Well, actually we're never going to get it all perfectly right but you get my point. Spiritually though, we need a lot of help from God along the way. Realizing all the time that God works in our lives, when we let Him and get out of the way. Let's turn to James 1, it talks about wisdom. We've read this many, many times. The context is trials, how to face trials—patience—that's what it works in us when we do things right.

**James 1:5** *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (NKJV)*

I like the way the NIV puts that.

**James 1:5** *If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. (NIV)*

In other words, God doesn't fault us for asking. You remember the scripture in Psalms where David asked God to show him his hidden sins? God appreciated his teachable attitude—he just went to God. He knew he needed help. You have to think about it a certain way, the way God treats us, because He doesn't lay everything on us at once and expect us to do everything perfectly at once. It's like raising kids. We were pretty involved with a couple of granddaughters and my wife would walk them to school. Like little kids, you help them, you teach them, you hold their hands. Then when they get older you let go a little more and a little more, and they aren't as vulnerable anymore. In a similar way, I think God treats us like His kids. God knows we lack wisdom and insight and it takes time to grow and mature spiritually.

One time, when I used to work for a living, and actually this is work too when you think about it, there are national standards in any industry and I was looking at those and we were the definition of a qualified person. That actually came from a standard that said that in order to have someone to do this particular type of a job—it was a semi dangerous job—you needed an experienced person to meet that qualification. Then you had to look up, what do they mean by experience. According to that standard for this particular job, 15 years is the minimum experience to do that job. To me that's about right, thinking about my career. I spent a couple of years in tech school and then went to work right away. Even as a journeyman/craftsman, it's 5 to 6 years before you can actually call yourself a journeyman and that's about right. Most apprenticeships for most crafts are 5 years.

I like James because it's a "between your eyes" book. It's loaded with personal pronouns—you, him, etc.—and we are all individuals with individual problems. We all need a personal dose of Godly wisdom at our level to guide us, wherever we are in

our walk with God. We need that all the time. Let's go to Psalm 139 and see a few things. Psalm 139 is interesting because David talks about God knowing and working with us even before conversion. We don't even really know at what point in our life God started calling us—we just don't. David understood something. It's amazing what he did understand. This Psalm is also loaded with personal pronouns. David got a lot of things wrong but in the end, God said he was *a man after God's own heart*. That was a big transition somewhere. God said David was a bloody man—he killed a lot of people.

**Psalm 139:1** *You have searched me, LORD, and you know me. (NKJV)*

It's amazing when you consider what he knew about God, about himself that God knew about him, and then when you think about the other 6-8 billion people on the planet, same thing with them. God knows that, God knows us all.

2) *You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. (NKJV)*

He knows our thoughts and motives. He knows our motives—everything we do—before we do it and most of the time even before we think it.

3) *You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. (NKJV)*

Nothing hidden—God knows why we do what we do.

4) *Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely. (NKJV)*

Even before it crosses our lips. Remember Jesus said, in a different context, we'll give account for idle words, the thoughts—in other words the ideas and thoughts behind our words—what is driving those words.

5) *You have hedged me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me. (NKJV)*

Talking about protection, both physical and spiritual, God is probably doing that a whole lot more than even we know. He's doing that while we are learning.

6) *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it. (NKJV)*

That's true, we can't even begin to comprehend what God knows, but we can ask for His help. We can tap into His knowledge and wisdom.

7) *Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?*  
8) *If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.*

9) *If I take the wings of the morning, [reminds me of the speed of light] And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, [in other words, no island we can hide on]*  
10) *Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me.*  
(NKJV)

In scripture the *right hand* symbolizes *work*. In other words, there's no place you can go or be where God can't work with you. He knows your life; He knows what you need when you need it. We don't know that. We get a surprise once in a while.

11) *If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," Even the night shall be light about me;*  
12) *Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.* (NKJV)

In other words, God is inescapable and you can't get away from God.

13) *For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb.*  
(NKJV)

When you read, *covered me, formed me*—I looked it up once and I don't know how many cells in our body, 90 trillion? God was there when all those were formed. Like an embroidery when you think about it. A human being made in the womb.

14) *I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well.* (NKJV)

David saw himself in God's image. Even as a human being, he knew his potential to be in God's family.

15) *My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.* (NKJV)

In other words, in the womb—secret, hidden, unobserved. Also, there could be a physical and spiritual application there.

16) *Your eyes saw my substance [DNA?], being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.* (NKJV)

No days, wasn't born yet. In other words, he recognized that God had foreknowledge about his life, what he would be, what he would do, where he would go. Notice again, all those personal pronouns but look at what God knows in the womb. When you think about the issue of abortion, that's got to be scary and man completely ignores that. Have you ever seen a mother grieve for a child? That happened recently to us in our family. No matter what the child has done, no matter what they become as adults, they are still your child. The physical and biblical cord has been cut but never the emotional

one; it's just there forever. It attaches to that child she carried, nurtured, held in her arms, nurtured for years—always her child. In a similar way, David is saying that God had the same attachment to him and with us.

*17) How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! (NKJV)*

We can't even begin to fathom the incredible detail in God's thinking.

*18) If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; When I awake, I am still with You. (NKJV)*

In other words, God never leaves us. With you always, he said He never changes. How thankful can we be for that? Just knowing that God never changes. He's always the same. Then he talks about the enemies. Down to verse 20.

*20) For they speak against You wickedly; Your enemies take Your name in vain.  
21) Do I not hate them, O LORD, who hate You? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You?  
22) I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them my enemies. (NKJV)*

Those last couple of verses really perplex the commentators. If you put that together with Proverbs 6:16-19 where it lists the things that God hates. We've been guilty of some of those too. In other words, what David is doing is personifying the enemies. He recognizes it as part of our own carnality as well as from the outside—things and people from the outside. He saw himself in that. He hated that. In verses 23 and 24, you can almost see the self-disgust that he had.

*23) Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties;  
24) And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting. (NKJV)*

One of the commentators says that is a closing prayer and it's a perennial prayer suitable for all of God's people in all times. That's because there are always sinning people, even converted people in God's eyes. This prayer isn't a challenge of a person protesting a person of his innocence. He's not someone who excuses himself; he's asking God very emotionally, very heartfelt, show him where he needed to change. When you think about it, the thing missing in this Psalm is any self-righteousness—it's not there. His eyes need to change, his eyes need for God's wisdom and everything he did.

That brings us to our last point.

### **3. Rely on God for change.**

I can't think of a better example of that—needing to rely on God for change—other than Romans 7. Paul in Romans 7, his seeming dilemma that he had there. From being a human being and wanting to change. From the New King James. I'll read verses 14-25.

**Romans 7:14** *For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.*

*15) For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. (NKJV)*

That's what happens when we try to choose salvation by our own effort. We can't win that struggle.

*16) If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.*

*17) But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.*

*18) For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. (NKJV)*

That's true; without God's Holy Spirit, when you think about that, when we were baptized and given God's Holy Spirit, we didn't have a clue that we needed to change anything or overcome anything. We didn't have the power, the wisdom, or anything that we needed to do that.

*19) For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. (NKJV)*

That's a word in the Greek—*practice*. It's #4238 and in the Greek it's a reference to the "habitual behaviors". In other words, you can't help what you're doing as a human being, without God's Spirit. That's the difference we have now. We're in the process, we have that help, we have access to that help, to overcome that human nature. Fits with those enemies that David was talking about—the physical and spiritual, that David dealt with.

*20) Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. (NKJV)*

In other words, it's embedded in his nature, as well as ours. We can't do it without God's help.

*21) I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.*

*22) For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.*

*23) But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (NKJV)*

Human nature—it's a non-winnable nature without God.

*24) O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*

*25) I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. (NKJV)*

It's interesting about Paul, he never let himself off the hook, carnally speaking. He didn't excuse himself. He didn't waffle around it. He didn't say, I'm just a carnal human being, I can't help it. He never excused himself. He always took personal responsibility for his behaviors is the way he did that. There are enough folks here who remember back in the earlier days when the brethren were blamed for everything. If something was going wrong, the brethren weren't praying or fasting enough. If there was a slight decline in church income, the brethren were blamed. If the church was attacked or persecuted, it was the brethren's fault. The point was, the brethren were sinning, but the ministry was just fine. To be fair, not all the ministry agreed with a lot of that. Unfortunately, the ones who exercised the power did and that's the way they were. Paul never ministered like that. Let's go to Ephesians 4, I think we were there earlier. Paul understood how it was supposed to work. A lot of it has to do with the changes we can make with God's help, if we rely on Him for that help. Again, from the New King James, verses 11-15.

**Ephesians 4:11** *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,  
12) for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,  
13) till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;  
(NKJV)*

That's talking about spiritual maturity that only comes through the process of change. The point is that Paul clearly understood the purpose and function of the ministry. It wasn't for their aggrandizement; it was for the edifying and the building up of the body of Christ. He also points out the source of spiritual growth. The ministry is not the source for spiritual growth. The ministry are only instruments that God uses.

*14) that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting ... (NKJV)*

Historically, there has been a lot of that.

*15) but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— (NKJV),*

That *grow up* means to mature, be finished, complete. That was actually Paul's ultimate desire for the church. To grow up, to grow into the perfect character of Christ, to change. They have that reference, let's turn to Philippians. You remember in Philippians 2:5 it says, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus". In Philippians 3:12.

**Philippians 3:12** *Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.*

*13) Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,*

*14) I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

*15) Therefore, let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. (NKJV)*

In other words, we ask for the wisdom like David did and Paul says we will get it. We have to ask for it.

*16) Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. (NKJV)*

It's an admonishment to keep going forward spiritually and not backward, even though sometimes we do.

*17) Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.*

*18) For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: (NKJV)*

Some just gave up. I don't need to change anymore, I'm tired of changing, I just want to quit.

*19) whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. (NKJV)*

In other words, they go right back to that value system of the world, which again is all temporary.

*20) For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,*

*21) who will transform [there's that word again] our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. (NKJV)*

Sometimes we just have to learn the hard way. I'll use it as a reference, in Psalm 119:71, the psalmist says:

*It's good for me I've been afflicted, that I may learn your statutes.*

Psalm 119 is a very long one, and called an extended meditation on the Torah. Sometimes we suffer and cry out to God, we get better and then we tend to forget about



the problem. It happens all the time. It's happened to me. What the Psalmist is saying in verse 71, if we believe God allows trials to come on us for our good, we should pause and ask if there is something I need to learn. Am I closer to God now that I've been hurting? Praying more? We've all been in pain and suffered through that. Sometimes it makes us see something in ourselves that we wouldn't have seen without that trial. Once again, James said *count it all joy in various trials*. In other words, we learn something that produces results in that spiritually maturing process. Through those trials and the things that we learn, we are learning lasting and permanent things that can happen to us. Everything so easily distracts us, but everything that distracts us keeps us from making those changes. I think we would all admit that there are hundreds of things around us every day to do. All of this will eventually be gone. Paul even knew that—he knew he would never reach the ultimate goal in physical form in this lifetime. He would just never do that. That didn't stop him from changing or striving for being in God's Kingdom as a spirit being. That's when he knew it would all come together finally. As long as he stayed in the race and kept trying to overcome his own nature and relying on God's help to do that.

When you think about Paul's desire for the church and for us too now—we use the knowledge that we have and we use God's Holy Spirit. We ask God for the Holy Spirit. He tells us what we need to change and gives us wisdom to work on it, to achieve those changes. We want to please God in our lives and we do that by changing. Hopefully we've grown in this process on a spiritual path and we change as we go along and mature. To summarize all the points, it just takes overcoming and change and that's the result of those three points I mentioned.

**1. Responding to God's admonishment to change.**

However, that comes to us. It can come in many different ways, we're all individuals.

**2. Look to God and Jesus Christ and ask for the wisdom to make those changes.**

Knowing that God and Jesus are active in our lives.

**3. Totally relying on God to enable those changes.**

That's going to result in the end in overcoming and with our eyes focused on being in God's Kingdom.