

GROW: Part One
GOD'S PART & MY PART IN CHANGING ME
Philippians 2:12-13

Over the years, I've often heard people say, "Jesus changed my life."
But how does Jesus change your life?

There's a lot of confusing advice about how God does this.

- Some people say, "Just wait on the Lord." (passive approach). Other people say, "It's up to me." (activist viewpoint).
- What am I supposed to do in order to grow? Is it all me or is it all God or is it a mixture of the two?

Paul Says- When it comes to your spiritual growth, the fact is, God has a part and you have a part. Paul uses two phrases to explain this cooperation:

"Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose."

WORK OUT & WORK IN

- **Work out is your part. Work in is God's part.**
- It doesn't say "work for" your salvation. It says "work out".
- These are Christians Paul is writing. He is saying develop what you already have.
- Work out the implications. If you're born again, start growing. Work it out.

When you work out a jigsaw puzzle, you already have all the pieces.
You've just got to put it together.

Then he says, "...work out your salvation..."

Salvation is one of the most important words in the NT.

- But it's religious jargon to most people.
- A good alternative would be 'FREEDOM'

To be saved by Jesus is to be set free from:- Guilt- Destructive behavior (sin)- Fear.
And set free to- Know God- Love others- Be what God made you to be.

Tomorrow- 100's of inmates in prisons will be set free- on one condition:
That they act like responsible human beings-
That they take responsibility for their freedom- Freedom demands responsibility!

In the same way- Work out your salvation- your freedom.

- Work out why you've been set free! Accept personal responsibility for it.
- God wants to work out the implications in your daily life.

Work out your salvation- "...with fear and trembling..."

- He doesn't mean '*Be afraid of God*'- You're part of his family now.
- He means, '*Be afraid that you might miss out on all that God has for you.*'

- Take your salvation seriously; Nothing is more important than growing into the person God made you to be.

"...for it is God who works in you..." That's God's part.

- We get the word "energizer" or "energy" from this Greek word "WORKS".
- God is the energizer for change in your life.
- **He says,** *"I will give you the power to do what you want to do, need to do, and know what is right to do. I will empower you"*

...To will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose"

- God will give you the will power and the ability. He'll give you the desire and the capability to change.

There are three tools God uses to work in your life, change, and three choices you need to make to work them out.

**I. GOD'S PART IN CHANGING ME
THREE TOOLS HE USES**

1. He uses the Bible.

"The whole Bible was given to us by inspiration from God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives; it straightens us out and helps us do what is right. It is God's way of making us well prepared at every point..." 2 Timothy 3:16-17

- The Bible changes our thoughts so it changes us. If you want to get serious about growing & changing, you need to get into this book.
- The more you get the Word of God in your life, the more you're going to be changed.

2. The Holy Spirit

God puts His Spirit in us. This is where the power comes from to change.

I Corinthians 3:18 *"As the Spirit of the Lord works with us, we become more and more like Him."*

God's number one purpose in your life is not to make you happy. Not even to make you comfortable- But to make you like Jesus.

In Genesis 1:27 when God first formed the world He said, "Let Us make man in Our image"

- And He's been wanting to do that ever since.
- God's preferred method of doing this is to tell us how to change through His word and then to give us the power to change through His Spirit.
- You read it and then He empowers you to do it.

Unfortunately, we don't always do things God's way. So He has to use a third way to change us when we don't respond to the Word or the Holy Spirit.

3. Circumstances

Problems, pressures, headaches & difficulties, always tend to get our attention.

Romans 8:28-29 "And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son..."

- Nothing can come into the life of a believer without God's permission.
- And God will use those circumstances for our good and His purpose- To make us like his Son.
- **Where do my problems come from?** Did I cause them? Are they from the devil? from God?
- It really doesn't matter where the problems in your life come from. No matter what the source is -God can use them. All things make me like Jesus.

If God is going to make me like Jesus, then He's going to take me through some situations that Jesus went through.

- There were times when Jesus was lonely.
- There were times when Jesus was tempted.
- There were times when Jesus was low or to got angry.
- If God allowed Jesus to go through those things. Do you think He's going to spare you from those things?
- He's more interested in your character than your comfort.

Hebrews 5:8 "Jesus learned obedience through suffering." How do you think you're going to learn it?

Hebrews 2:10 says, "Jesus was made perfect through suffering." How do you think you're going to be made perfect?

He works first through His word, then second, by the Holy Spirit.

But if those two don't work, He uses circumstances. Trust me- it'll save you a lot of trouble if you focus on the first two!

II. MY PART IN CHANGING ME THREE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO GROW/CHANGE

1. I can choose what I think about.

Growth is not automatic. It doesn't just come passively, spiritually. Change is a matter of choice and I can choose what I think about.

Proverbs 4:23 "Be careful how you think. Your life is shaped by your thoughts."

- You aren't what you think you are. But what you think, you are.

- Your thoughts don't just direct your life, they are your life.
- Whatever change you want to make in your life starts with your thoughts.

Ephesians 4:23-25 "Let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.

- Change always begins with new thinking. The
- Bible word for change is the word "repentance". In Greek it means "to change your mind".
- When I became a Christian it changed my whole perspective on life and I began to see things differently.

Romans 12:2 "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." If you want to be changed, start with the renewing of your mind.

Psychologists found this out about 2000 years later.

- They discovered that the way that I think determines the way that I feel. The way that I feel determines the way that I act. (CBT).

The key is to start with the way that you think.

It's like trying to change the course of a speedboat on automatic pilot. You can try to change course by grabbing the wheel- but you're always fighting the automatic pilot- so you get tired and give up. The best way to change course is change the automatic pilot.

The Bible says change starts in the mind -- "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

What is your automatic pilot? Finish this sentence: "It's just like me to be ... " That is the automatic pilot right there.

2. I can choose to depend on God's Spirit moment by moment.

This is where the power comes in. Jesus gave a beautiful illustration of this in **John 15:4-5** "Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit."

- A branch cannot produce fruit by itself. It's got to be connected.
- Jesus is saying that's the way we have to be with God.
- We have to be plugged in. God has the power. But it's not automatic. It's when you're plugged in, tuned in to God that the power comes through you.

How do you know when you're depending on God's Spirit? Check your prayer life. Whatever you pray about you're depending on God for. Whatever you don't pray about you're not depending on God for.

- What does it mean to depend on God? It means to pray continually.
- You are aware that God is constantly with you. And you depend on him every moment.
- You practice His presence and have a running conversation with Him.

3. I can choose my response to circumstances.

There is a parallel between God's resources and your choice.

- God has the resource of His Word; you chose to read it.
- God has the Holy Spirit; you choose to depend on Him.
- God uses circumstances; you choose your response to them.

James 1:2-4 "Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing."

The Christian life is not a one time event. It is a process.

- There is a process going on in your life to produce mature character.
- Sometimes that involves difficult circumstances.
- James is saying I can choose my response to that process....

Victor Frankel, the famous psychologist, was imprisoned in one of the concentration camps in World War II. He said one day they had stripped him naked, taken his clothes, shoes, family, his wedding ring. He said they had taken away everything physically that they could. But standing there in front of the Nazi soldiers he realized there was one thing that could never be taken from him. That was his choice to respond to the circumstances he experienced in life. That is ultimate freedom.

You cannot choose what is going to happen to you. But you can choose how you're going to respond.

- Whether it's going to make you or break you, whether you're going to be bitter or better.
- What really matters in life the most is not what happens TO you. What matters most is what happens IN you. That is your choice.

What do you want to change? The power to change comes from God's word, God's power and your choices.

Whatever you want to change it takes cooperation with God.

He will do it through His word and through His spirit. But it starts with our choices.