

People Change

When General Motors came out with the new aerodynamic style Chevy Caprice (1990) I said that I would never have one of those "ugly" things. When cellular phones started getting popular, I thought it was dumb to carry your phone with you. Not more than two years ago I sat in a restaurant and noticed a man answering his phone while he ate. My comment to Joan was, "That's crazy!" I used to think golf was silly. In fact, when "pressed" into going last year, I reminded those I was with that President Teddy Roosevelt said this was a game for those who are "sissy."

Just the other day I stood on the golf course talking on my cellular phone. When I finished the ninth hole, I loaded my clubs in the back of my '92 Caprice and drove home. My point? People change. Sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse. We need to be reminded that people do change.

The Ability To Change

The fact that people can change is a wonderful thing -- a reason to be thankful. Contrary to the concept that says, "That's just my nature -- I can't help it," we do have a choice.

Any passage that points to the free moral agency of man says that man has the ability to change (Ezekiel 18; Romans 6). Since man can change, he doesn't have to continue as he is. He has a choice. So, we must conclude that people are like they are because that's the way they want to be.

Those who are ungodly, weak, or unfaithful are so, not because they can't help it, but because they choose to be. Those who are godly, strong, and faithful are so because they changed.

Change is the idea of repentance. It involves a change of mind. Jesus spoke of a son who had said he wouldn't do what his father said, but later he repented and went ([Matthew 21:28-29](#)). The people repented at the preaching of Jonah ([Matthew 12:41](#)). The book of Jonah describes that as turning from evil ([Jonah 3:10](#)).

What a blessing! I can change my life.

Sinners Can Change

People who are in sin can change, even the worst of sinners. The apostle Paul is a classic example. He was a zealous enemy of the cause of Christ. He persecuted Christians ([Acts 8:1-4](#); [9:1-3](#)). He described himself as the "chief of sinners" ([1 Timothy 1:15](#)). Later we see him as an apostle preaching and teaching the very things he fought. He changed ([Acts 9:22](#), [26](#); [1 Timothy 1](#); [Philemon 1](#)).

Some of the very ones who had stood at Pilot's Praetorium and cried, "Crucify him, Crucify him" repented and were baptized by the authority of the very one they put to death ([Acts 2:21-41](#)). Those who comprised the church at Corinth made giant changes. They were fornicators, prostitutes, adulterers, and even homosexuals. But, they changed ([1 Corinthians 6:9-11](#)).

Today, we look at the homosexual, the drunkard, the drug addict, and the thief with great disdain. We think it of little benefit to even invite them to church, much less say anything to them about obedience to the gospel. After all, they wouldn't be interested. Besides, we wonder if we really want to associate with those people anyway. But, God, through his word, can change these people ([Romans 1:16](#)).

We may shake our heads in frustration at those who are weak or unfaithful thinking that their "service" isn't worth a plug nickel. Then, we remember cases of those who changed and serve God better than they ever have. Thank God for change!

The apostle Peter was already a disciple of the Lord when he denied he knew the Lord. Later, he acted the part of a hypocrite at Antioch ([Galatians 2:11-14](#)). However, later he is found urging God's people to be diligent and strong ([1 Peter 1:15](#); [3:15](#); [II Peter 1:5-10](#)). He changed!

The Righteous Can Change

It is likewise true that those who are righteous can change. Just because someone is faithful and diligent in his service to God doesn't mean that he will always be.

There is the ever present danger that one can drift away and depart. The Hebrew writer warned, "Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away" ([Hebrews 2:1](#)).

Our hearts are saddened -- even sickened -- when we learn of one who was once faithful and dedicated to the Lord but who doesn't even attend worship anymore. What's sad is that specific cases could be compounded.

It is equally disappointing when we see those we have had confidence in getting weaker and tolerating things they would have once abhorred.

The point to be learned is that we must take heed lest it happen to us. Paul said, "*Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall*" ([1 Corinthians 10:12](#)). That means it could happen to any one of us!

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