

GOD'S PART/MY PART IN CHANGING ME
How to Enjoy the Rest of Your Life - Part 4 of 12
Philippians 2:12-13
Rick Warren

PHILIPPIANS 2:12

" ... 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":

"your salvation":

"God works in you":

I. GOD'S PART IN CHANGING ME.

3 Tools He Uses

1. _____

"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 (LB)

2. _____

"Once the Spirit ... lives within you, He will bring to your whole being ... new strength and vitality."

Romans 8:11 (Ph)

"As the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like Him."

I Cor. 3:18 (LB)

3. _____

"To those who love God and are called according to his plans, everything that happens fits into a pattern for good. For God chose us to bear the family likeness of his Son."

Rom. 8:28-29 (Ph)

"Sometimes it takes a painful situation to make us change our ways."

Prov. 20:30 (GN)

II. MY PART IN CHANGING ME -- THREE CHOICES

1. I can choose _____.

"Be careful how you think. Your life is shaped by your thoughts."

Prov. 4:23 (GN)

"Your mind must be renewed by a spiritual revolution so that you can put on the 'new self' that has been created in God's way ..." Eph 4:23-25 (Jer)

Rom. 12:2 Think Feel Act

Value of Bible Meditation: Psalm 1:1-3

Phil. 4:8, Col. 3:16, Ps. 119:9 & 11, Joshua 1:8

2. I can choose _____.

"Take care to live in Me and let Me live in you. For a branch can't produce fruit when severed from the vine. Nor can you be fruitful apart from Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever lives in Me and I in him shall produce a large crop of fruit."

John 15:4-5 (LB)

3. I can choose _____.

"When all kinds of trials crowd into your lives, don't resent them as intruders but welcome them as friends! Realize that they come to test your faith and produce in you the quality of endurance. But let the process go on until that endurance is fully developed and you become people of mature character, people of integrity, with no weak spots."

James 1:2-4 (Ph)

"We can be full of joy here and now, even in our trials and troubles. These very things will give us patient endurance; this in turn will develop a mature character ..." Romans 5:3-4

GOD'S PART/MY PART IN CHANGING ME
How to Enjoy the Rest of Your Life - Part 4 of 12
Philippians 2:12-13
Rick Warren

Philippians 2:12-13. What would you like to change in your life? As I was growing up, I heard people say, "Jesus changed my life." How does Jesus change your life? Does He do surgery or brain wash you? Zap you with something and all of a sudden you're changed?

There's a lot of confusing advise coming out now days on how God changes us. Some people say, "Just wait on the Lord." A passive approach. Other people say, "If it's to be, it's up to me." An 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 combination?

Paul deals with this very issue. 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." Circle "work out" and "work in". Work out is your part. Work in is God's part. We are to work out what God is working in.

This doesn't say "work for" your salvation. It says "work out". The Bible says "It is not of works, lest any man should boast." These are already Christians to whom 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.

What do you do in a physical workout? You do a workout not to get a body but to develop the body you already have. When you work out a puzzle, you already have all the pieces. You've just got to put it together. When a farmer works the ground, he's cultivating it. Not work for, but work it out. Work out the implications.

Then he says, "...work out your salvation..." Circle "your". He's talking about an individual assignment. Accept personal responsibility for your growth. Your salvation, not somebody else's. Yours. Individually. God wants to work out the implications of it in your life individually. God does not want cookie-cutter Christians. He doesn't want a bunch of spiritual clones walking around, everybody copying each other. What does the gospel mean in your life? You are unique and individual. He doesn't want you to be Billy Graham; He wants you to be you.

"...with fear and trembling..." Don't be afraid of God. Christians have no need to fear God in terms of being afraid of Him. You are a part of His family. You're afraid you might miss out on all that God has made for you. Take your salvation seriously; it has eternal implications. It's a life or death issue here. Nothing is more important than your own spiritual growth. Take it seriously.

"...for it is God who works in you..." That's God's part. Circle "works". We get the word "energizer" or "energy" from this Greek word. 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

GOD'S PART/MY PART IN CHANGING ME

How to Enjoy the Rest of Your Life - Part 4 of 12

do. I will empower you, energize you." God is the energizer to will and to act. He 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 to 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 change, you need to get into this book. Read it, study it, memorize it, meditate on it, live it in your life. The more you get the Word of God in your life, the more you're going to be changed.

People say, "I don't have any faith." I ask them, "Are you reading the Bible?" They say, "No." What do they expect? The Bible says, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

2. The Holy Spirit

God puts His Spirit in us. This is where the power comes from to change. Romans 8:11: "Once the Spirit lives within you, He will bring to your whole being new strength and vitality." God will bring power into your life. The Holy Spirit is God Himself. He's in Spirit form. When you commit your life to God, He comes into your life.

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, but to make you like Jesus.

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. That is His ultimate goal -- to change you.

God's ideal is to tell us how to change through His word and 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 follow the ideal. So God 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, stress always gets our attention.

GOD'S PART/MY PART IN CHANGING ME

How to Enjoy the Rest of Your Life - Part 4 of 12

Romans 8:28-29 "To those who love God and are called according to His plan everything that happens fits into a pattern for good. For God chose us to bear the family likeness of His Son." There is nothing that could come into the life of a believer without God's permission. He doesn't say they are all good, but He will use them for good to fit into a pattern. There is a divine pattern.

Where are my problems coming 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 it in your life if you'll let Him. All things can fit into a pattern for good -- to 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 tempted to be depressed or to get angry and blow up or to be impatient. And 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 the Holy Spirit, then, if those two don't work, He uses circumstances. For instance: Scripture says, "Be humble. Before honor is humility." You read it from the Word and ask God for the power to get rid of the ego in your life. That's God's ideal way of dealing with that. But if you don't learn to be humble from God's word, He will humiliate you through a circumstance. It's very easy for God to humble me. He has 1001 ways to do it! Even if you read the Bible six hours a day, it's still not the major section of your life. How many hours a day do you have circumstances? Twenty four hours a day. God often has to depend more on the third way than the first two. Those are the tools that He uses in your life. Proverbs 20:30 "Sometimes it takes a painful situation to make us change our ways." We rarely change until we get desperate. We don't change too often when we see the light, but we always change when we feel the heat. God lights a fire under us and we get moving. Often we will put up with things we know needs to be changed in our lives until we being to be uncomfortable. God sometimes has to bring some thunderstorms into our lives to say, "Do something. I want you to change. Don't get stuck in a rut." (A rut is just a grave with the ends kicked out.)

II. MY PART IN CHANGING ME

THREE CHOICES THAT WILL HELP YOU 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,

GOD'S PART/MY PART IN CHANGING ME

How to Enjoy the Rest of Your Life - Part 4 of 12

they are your life. If we could see on a giant screen what you think about we would really know who you are. Whatever change you want to make in your life starts with your thoughts.

Ephesians 4:23-25 "Your mind must be renewed by a spiritual revolution so that you can put on the `new self' that has been created in God's way." 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 repented I changed the way I thought about God, the way I thought about myself, the world, others. I changed my outlook. When I became a Christian it changed my whole perspective on life and I began to see things differently. I began to challenge some of those old ways of thinking, old values.

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. In a lot of behavior modification and people trying to change their life, they are trying to change the actions rather than going back to the root of the actions. There is no action without a thought behind it. If you're acting depressed it's because you feel depressed. You feel depressed because you're thinking some depressing thoughts. The key is to start with the way that you think. You can't fight a feeling.

Notice the illustration of the speed boat set on automatic pilot to go east. All of a sudden you say you want to turn the boat 180° around and go west. That is the number one question I'm asked as pastor, "How can I change?" There are two ways. One way is to grab the steering wheel and force it by sheer will power to the opposite way. Even though the automatic pilot wants to go east you are forcing it west. The tension says goes east, but you are forcing it to go the opposite direction. You are forcing yourself to go opposite to your own nature. The whole time you're holding the wheel you're getting tired because there is tension and soon you let go of the steering wheel and ... go off the diet, start smoking again, reading material you've been trying to stop reading ... whatever it is. Sheer will power doesn't work.

The Bible says change starts in the mind -- "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Change the automatic pilot. If you change it, the direction changes easily.

What is your automatic pilot? Finish this sentence: "It's just like me to be ... " That is the agenda you've set in your life. One of the things you ought to start choosing to think about is God's word. Jesus said, "Thy word is truth." If you want to change start filling your mind with the Scripture. Psalm 1:1-3 "Blessed is the man who meditates on God's word." When we meditate on God's word it gets into our mind and changes us.

Phil. 4:8 says "Think on these things" and it tells you the kinds of things to think about. Col. 3:6 "Let the word of God dwell in you richly." Psalm 1:19 "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against God." Joshua 1:8 "The secret of success is meditate on God's word day and night and you'll be successful." You begin by thinking God's word. If you're not having a daily quiet time you're not seeing much change in your life. Or at least not as much as you could be seeing.

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 "Take care to live in Me and let Me live in you. For a branch can't produce fruit when severed from the vine. Nor can you be fruitful apart from me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever lives in me and I in him shall produce a large crop of fruit."

A branch is totally dependant upon the vine. When it is cut off from that vine, it won't bear any grapes, or figs, or whatever. 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.

Fruit is an inside job. How would it be if I planted a old, dead tree. Then two weeks before harvest I tie a bunch of apples to it. A lot of Christians are trying to do this. They are trying to tie good works onto their life to look like they are making progress, when it's something they just picked up from the outside rather than let it flow through their life as they depend on God's spirit. And that's a choice.

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. Your decisions, your feelings, your relationships, deadlines, purchases, everything. Whatever you want God to bless, that's what you pray about. You are aware that God is constantly with you. You practice His presence and have a running conversation with Him. You whisper up a prayer to God no matter what you're doing. Talk to God about anything and everything. That's what it means to depend on His Spirit.

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're supposed to read it. God has the Holy Spirit; you choose to depend on Him. God uses circumstances; you choose your response to circumstances.

James 1:2-4 "When all kinds of trials crowd into your lives don't resent them as intruders but welcome them as friends. Realize that they come to test your faith and produce in you the quality of endurance. But let the process go on until that endurance is fully developed and you become people of mature character, people of integrity, with no weak spots."

Circle the word "process". The Christian life is not a one time event. It is an event followed by a process. You're born again and you've got to grow, develop, work out the salvation you've been given. Not work for, but work out the implications. You develop it. The more you use your muscles the more you develop your muscles. There is a process going on in your life to produce mature character. That's God's goal -- Christ like character in your life.

James is saying I can choose my response to life.

GOD'S PART/MY PART IN CHANGING ME

How to Enjoy the Rest of Your Life - Part 4 of 12

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 next week, next month, next year. We don't have that choice. But you can choose how you're going to respond, how you're going to react -- whether it's going to make you or break you, whether you're going to be bitter or better, whether it's going to be a stepping stone to maturity or a stumbling block to failure. Your choice the way you choose to respond to the circumstances that come into your life.

What really matters in life the most is not what happens to you. What happens to you is not the most important thing in your life. What happens in you is what matters most. That is a choice. We've seen people put in the same bad circumstances. One will come out a winner and the other will come out a whiner. One's complaining and the other is turning it into a gold mine.

Romans 5:3-4 "We can be full of joy here and now, even in our trials and troubles. These very things [the trials and troubles] will give us patient endurance; this in turn will develop a mature character."

"Character" is in both verses. It's the bottom line, the ultimate goal. In Romans 5, the word means "something that has been proven reliable". It's passed the test. When we choose the way we respond it produces character.

The way God produces the fruit of the Spirit in our lives -- love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, self-control -- by putting you in the exact opposite situation. You want to learn love? God is going to put you around some unlovely people. It's easy to love the lovely. You want to learn joy? He'll put you in some tragedies and you'll learn that joy is different than happiness. Peace? It's easy to be peaceful setting on the beach in Tahiti. Peace is learned in chaos. Goodness? He'll put you in situations where you're tempted for badness. Self-control? He'll take you to a church pot luck or move you down the street from Baskin-Robbins. God allows us in the opposite situation in order to help us grow.

What do you want to change the most about yourself? The power to change comes from God's power and your choices. When you choose to do the right thing, God gives you the power. What God tells you to do He gives you the power to do. Whatever you want to change it takes cooperation with God. He will work it in if you will work it out. God has promised to give you both the desire, the will power and the ability to make those changes. He will do it through His word and through His spirit. He will energize your life to make those changes. But it starts with our choices