

## **A Message of Encouragement** **"A Work In Progress"**

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A man went to the doctor after weeks of symptoms. The doctor examined him carefully, and then left the husband alone in the examination room, went in to speak to the man's wife alone.

*"Your husband is suffering from a rare form of anemia. Without treatment, he'll be dead in a few weeks. The good news is, it can be treated with proper nutrition."*

*"You will need to get up early every morning and fix your husband a hot breakfast-pancakes, bacon and eggs, the works. He'll need a home-cooked lunch every day, and then an old-fashioned meat-and-potato dinner every evening."*

*"It would be especially helpful if you could bake frequently. Cakes, pies, homemade bread-these are the things that will allow your husband to live."*

*"One more thing. His immune system is weak, so it's important that your home be kept spotless at all times."*

*"Do you have any questions?" **The wife said nothing....***

*"Do you want to break the news to your husband, or shall I?" asked the doctor. **"I will,"** the wife replied.*

She walked into the exam room. The husband, sensing the seriousness of his illness, asked her, *"It's bad, isn't it?"*

She nodded, tears welling up in her eyes. *"What's going to happen to me?" he Asked?"*

With a sob, the wife blurted out,

***"The doctor says you're gonna die!"***

### **Romans 7:15, 19**

15 I don't understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do the very thing I hate.

19 When I want to do good, I don't. And when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway.

### **What is wrong with us?**

☞ **I always thought** that when we gave our life to Jesus Christ and became a Christian, that we would suddenly become like Jesus and see all of our behaviors and attitudes change.

☞ **Do you know** what I mean?

**How many of you also thought that after you became a Christian you would have better behavior and attitudes, but actually that is not the case many times?**

### **2 Corinthians 5:17**

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

If you have ever read that verse and thought to yourself, **“I don’t feel like a new creation sometimes...”** then this study is for you.

- ☞ **When we compare** ourselves to Jesus, we come up so short.
- ☞ **His behavior** and our behavior are very often opposites.
- ☞ **The things** that Jesus cares about, are often **not** the things we care about.
- ☞ **The way** Jesus loves is often **not** the way that we love

**This is what happened to Peter as he began to compare himself to Jesus...**

### **Luke 5:8**

When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!

We can get very discouraged when we start to see the real differences between ourselves and Jesus.

### **2 Corinthians 4:16**

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is **being renewed** day by day.

**And here is a key word that we need to pay attention to, because it will help us understand why we presently do not always see in us the kind of person we want to see.**

- ☞ **2 Corinthians 4:16**; *“The inward man is BEING renewed day by day...”*
- ☞ **The process** of this change is not immediate, it is progressive, little by little, day by day.

**Now the process of becoming a “New Creation” at the moment you first believed in and accepted Jesus Christ is instantaneous.**

- ☞ **That is**, the moment you believed, you became a completely different person, you were “Born Again”, Spiritually.
- ☞ **Unfortunately**, we still live in the same old Body, with the same old thoughts and attitudes.
- ☞ **There is now** a struggle between the spirit in us that is Born Again, and the flesh which has not been changed at all.

☞ **These** have to be transformed over time.

**That is where the confusion comes in as to why we are no drastically different now that we have believed in Jesus and become new creations.**

### **2 Corinthians 5:4**

For **we who are in this tent groan**, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.

This is what Paul felt when he compared the things he was saying and doing to what He WANTED to be saying and doing...

- ☞ **Paul also** “*Groaned*” within himself when he didn’t see the changes he hoped for.
- ☞ **He even wrote** in Romans 7 :

### **Romans 7:15, 19**

15 I don’t understand myself at all, for **I really want to do what is right, but I don’t do it.** Instead, I do the very thing I hate.

19 When I want to do good, I don’t. And when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway.

**Paul understood the conflict that is within all of us, to want to be more like Jesus but not always able to.**

### **Matthew 26:41**

Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. **The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.**”

Now, one of two things can happen to you when you see this inconsistency in yourself between how you are and how you want to be.

1. **You can accept this fact** and be patient with yourself and with others, as Jesus changes us day by day over time.
2. **You can become down and depressed** and try to force your behavior to change and make the process a work of your own flesh instead of a work of the Spirit.

**This is what happened to the church at Galatia.**

### **Galatians 3:3**

Are you so foolish? Having **begun in the Spirit**, are you now **being made perfect by the flesh?**

We cannot obtain change in our life simply by “**Trying Harder**”, it must also be teamed with the work of the Holy Spirit to effect the changes.

☞ **If the effort is all physical**, then the changes will not last.

- ☞ **If the effort is teamed** with the Work of the Holy Spirit, then the changes will last forever.

### **John 14:26**

But **the Helper, the Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in My name, **He will teach you** all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

**An example of this is seen in the Book of Acts chapter one:**

- ☞ **After Jesus** was Crucified and risen from the dead.
- ☞ **After Judas Iscariot** betrayed Jesus and took his own life.
- ☞ **The Apostles** were left with only 11 men.
- ☞ **They decided** that that THEY needed to find a **12<sup>th</sup> man**.
- ☞ **So they prayed**, then drew straws and chose "**Matthias**".
- ☞ **Now of course** you have read all about the Apostle Mathias in the New Testament right?
- ☞ **No!** We don't read anything about Matthias except here in this test of Acts chapter one.
- ☞ **Why is that?** Because **Matthias WAS NOT the Lord's choice** for the 12<sup>th</sup> Apostle, this was the Apostles choice.

### **Acts 1:24-2:1**

24 And they prayed and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen

25 to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place."

26 And **they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias**. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

2:1 **When the Day of Pentecost had fully come**, they were all with one accord in one p

**Did you notice what happened right after they chose Mathias?**

- ☞ "*Then the day of Pentecost had FULLY COME.*"
- ☞ **The Apostles** made this choice for Matthias **BEFORE the Holy Spirit had been given**.
- ☞ **They made their choice** in "*Their Flesh*", without the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- ☞ **EVERY CHOICE** we make without the leading of the Holy Spirit **will always be wrong**.

So, we cannot change our behavior and make ourselves better by "**Trying Harder**" if that trying harder is without the Power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit opens up our mind so that we are "**Enlightened**" to know what needs to be changed in us, and how to do it.

### **Ephesians 1:18**

**the eyes of your understanding being enlightened;** that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints

**So it takes both.**

- ⊕ **The Leading of the Holy Spirit**, His Power working in us. **AND**
- ⊕ **Our Obedience** in seeking to make changes.

And we must remember that it is going to take time, **A LOT of time**, your entire lifetime in fact:

### **Ephesians 2:21**

in whom the whole building, **being** fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,

### **Ephesians 2:22**

in whom you also are **being built** together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

**Paul wrote to the Corinthian Church that it was like looking in a mirror with a veil over our face.**

- ⊕ **We cannot see** yet the Glory of Jesus life in our life quite yet.
- ⊕ **That this** transformation process is from “*Glory to Glory*”.
- ⊕ **This transformation** process is “*By the Spirit of the Lord*”.

### **2 Corinthians 3:18**

But we all, with **unveiled face**, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, **are being transformed** into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

At the same time though, you are already “PERFECTED” In Jesus eyes, because you have believed in His sacrifice for your sins:

### **Hebrews 10:14**

For by one offering He **has perfected forever** those who are being sanctified

Notice though that this verse in Hebrews 10:14 says that we are “**Being Sanctified**”.

- ⊕ **Sanctified means** to “*Set Apart*”, to make something totally dedicated to someone or something.
- ⊕ **You and I** “ARE BEING” set apart for Jesus, **it is a Process**, that takes time.

**Now there is a huge problem with us as human beings when we tell someone that something is going to take some time.**

- ⊕ **Either** we get really irritated and impatient. OR
- ⊕ **We become indifferent** and lackadaisical and think that we have LOTS of time, so we keep putting it off, and never take it seriously.

I know most of you pretty well and there are some of us who are very irritated and impatient with yourselves that your behavior is taking so long to change...

**There are others here that realize that these changes are going to take lots of time so you have become a little lackadaisical, (without much enthusiasm or effort) to make changes...**

Sometimes we are a little of both, I know I am both of these sometimes...

### **1 Peter 2:5**

you also, as living stones, **are being built up** a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ

In the Old Testament, when Joseph was sold by his brothers as a slave in Egypt, **it was by the process of this difficult time in his life that all the changes the Lord wanted to make in him, were accomplished.**

### **Genesis 37:2**

This is the history of Jacob. **Joseph, being seventeen years old**, was feeding the flock with his brother

### **Genesis 37:5**

Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and **they hated him** even more

### **Genesis 37:28**

Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and **sold him to the Ishmaelites** for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt

### **Genesis 39:1**

Now **Joseph had been taken down to Egypt**. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there

### **Genesis 39:7**

And it came to pass after these things that **his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph**, and she said, "Lie with me."

### **Genesis 39:10**

So it was, as she spoke to Joseph **day by day, that he did not heed her**, to lie with her or to be with her.

### **Genesis 39:20**

Then **Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison**, a place where the king's prisoners were confined. And he was there in the prison.

### **Genesis 41:14**

**Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him quickly out of the dungeon;** and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh.

#### **Genesis 41:15**

And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. **But I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream,** to interpret it.

#### **Genesis 41:25**

Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “**The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do:**

#### **Genesis 41:41**

And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “**See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.**”

#### **Genesis 41:46**

**Joseph was thirty years old** when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt

#### **Genesis 45:4-5**

4 And Joseph said to his brothers, “Please come near to me.” So they came near. Then he said: “I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt.

5 But now, **do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.**

**When Josephs brothers sold him into slavery he was just 17 years old.**

- ⊞ **When he was tempted** by Potiphar’s wife, Joseph was **just 17 years old.**
- ⊞ **When Joseph was 30 years old** he stood before Pharaoh to begin his ministry there.
- ⊞ **Jesus was also 30 years old** when He began His public ministry.

Joseph went through 13 years of being betrayed by his family and friends, misunderstood, wrongfully accused, and imprisoned for things he didn’t do.

- ⊞ **The process of those 13 years** made Joseph into the man that God wanted him to be.
- ⊞ **If Joseph did not go through** those 13 years of trials, He would not have been used by the Lord to save and entire nation from the famine that came upon the whole earth for 7 years.

**Josephs attitude at the end of his long trial, towards the very people who had hurt him, used him, cause him 13 terrible years of pain was this:**

*“...do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life...”*

**Even as Jesus also said from the Cross to those who had put him on the Cross:**

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### **Luke 23:34**

Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

There is a very real process that all of us are going through right now.

- ☞ **You may or may not** recognize that you are in this process.
- ☞ **But all of us are in the process**, who know and love Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

**There are every day ordinary circumstances that the Lord is using to bring us along to that place that He wants for us to arrive at.**

Even when you make stupid mistakes, the Lord is in those mistakes, making them turn out for your good, because you love Him and are called by Him for a purpose.

**Let me show you what I mean...**

A pastor of a small church had a kitten that climbed up a tree in his backyard and then was afraid to come down.

The pastor coaxed, offered warm milk, etc. The kitty would not come down.

The tree was not sturdy enough to climb, so the pastor decided that if he tied a rope to his car and pulled on the tree so that it would bend down, he could then reach up and get the kitten.

He attached the rope to the tree, and moved his car forward, all the while, checking his progress.

He decided that if he went just a little bit further, the tree would be bend sufficiently for him to reach the kitten. But as he moved a little further forward, the rope broke. The tree went **boing!**" and the kitten instantly sailed through the air-out of sight

The pastor felt terrible. He walked all over the neighborhood asking people if they'd seen a little kitten. No. Nobody had seen a stray kitten. **So he prayed, "Lord, I just commit this kitten to your keeping,"** and went on about his business.

A few days later he was at the grocery store, and met one of his church members that lived behind him. He happened to look into her shopping cart and was amazed to see cat food. **This woman was a cat hater** and everyone knew it, so he asked her, "Why are you buying cat food when you hate cats so much?"

She replied, **"You won't believe what happened"** and began to describe how her little girl had been begging her for a cat, but she kept refusing.

On this one particular day, her child had been asking her for a kitten again so she finally told her little girl, **"Well, if the Lord gives you a cat, I'll let you keep it."**

She told the pastor, **"I watched my child go out in the yard, get on her knees, and ask God for a cat. And really, Pastor, you won't believe this, but I saw it with my own eyes. A kitten suddenly came flying out of the blue sky, with its paws spread out and landed right in front of her."**

**Romans 8:28**

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose