

Churches of Galatia (Slide 1)

Can One Really Change?

Reading :Psalm 51:1-13

The answer to this question is really the root of much of what Apostle Paul is writing concerning the churches of Galatia. They are being persuaded to change from the true Gospel to a false gospel.

The Judaizing teachers are claiming that you can't listen to Apostle Paul, after all, look at his days of persecution. He hasn't really changed. Isn't this often the approach. Either we are convinced someone has changed or we can't accept it/ don't want to believe it-cannot forgive or we are at the very least, skeptical.

The answer though is yes people can change!! Sometimes from bad to good and sometimes from good to bad!!

Acts 9:26 (Slide 2)

When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple.

When a person has been a certain way in their life and people have come to know that person that way, it makes it sometimes difficult to believe they have changed.

Paul was a changed man!! He was no longer Saul the persecutor but Apostle Paul, a messenger for God!!

We so often mistrust the change in a person when it seems to me that a person who has genuinely changed has a great deal to offer. Someone who has been through the "mud" of life and is now clean, could be the very person who would be in a position to help others not make the same mistakes.

David writes: **Psalm 51:13**

Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,

And sinners shall be converted to You.

Perhaps the prodigal son would be the perfect spokesperson for the youth of our day, who could prevent them from making the mistakes that he made.

I have heard people say that you can't trust someone who has made poor decisions. If that is true then the field of those we can trust would indeed be narrow.

But often we don't give someone like that a chance because we feel that they will soon fall back into the life they once lived:

2 Peter 2:22 (Slide 3)

But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

Many times this is the case and we come to anticipate they will fail again. Unfortunately, some want people to fail so they may say; *"I told you so!"*

It is difficult to know sometimes if someone has changed. When it appears change has come we don't always recognize their motives. Yet, people do change and by and by we can see it in them.

Nevertheless, we get the idea that some people cannot be reached and they become throw-aways in our society. They have become people who lack human sense or the ability to overcome and seem to be deadset on resisting change.

Proverbs 27:22 (Slide 4)

Though you grind a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain,

Yet his foolishness will not depart from him.

A "pestle" is a blunt tool used to crush, grind, mash, and pound some material in the "mortar," a bowl.

My dad had a saying somewhat similar; *"They don't have enough sense to pound sand in a rat hole"* (never really understood the saying exactly) or *"They're not smart enough to make a ham sandwich!"*

So often we judge people in this way and we give up on them. I understand the feeling because we do get to the point where we feel it is useless. *"What if God felt that way about us."*

We are ***"saved by Grace through faith!!"*** What we don't often give consideration to is the fact we are also saved by the impartiality of God. Everyone deserves and is given a chance!! We have to help them so they don't throw that chance away and regret it for eternity!!

It's interesting to note that many people suffer for their poor life decisions but continue to make the same choices.

The gambler loses his wages for food or groceries so he has less to eat. Yet, as soon as it is payday he squanders it again.

The drunk is told by his doctor to give up drinking or continue to feel the effects of his pickled liver and die from cirrhosis.

The smoker, who is suffering from lung cancer or emphysema, continues to smoke.

The list can go on and on!!

What does this tell us, well we are encountering someone who is foolish but that does not state that one cannot change!!

This does not mean that a person is always born into folly, rather it is a choice one has made to follow foolishness rather than sound thinking:

Proverbs 9:4-6 (Slide 5)

4 *"Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!"*

As for him who lacks understanding, she says to him,

5 *"Come, eat of my bread*

(Slide 6) *And drink of the wine I have mixed.*

6 Forsake foolishness and live,

And go in the way of understanding.

A very nice young man became a different person after falling in with a crowd of people he thought were his friends. It started in high school with the hope of fitting in and experiencing what he was afraid he would miss out on.

He believed all along that his friends were laughing with him, and wouldn't realize until later that they were actually laughing at him!

He began to drink and drink heavily until it had absolute control over him. It was what he thought of every morning instead of productivity or even food. He consumed it and all the while he didn't realize it was consuming him.

One day began just like all others with a pounding headache and a nauseous stomach. He reached for what he considered his only cure, Satan's liquid of sure fire destruction when something snapped in his neck. It was paralyzing and he experienced great pain.

He hadn't even realized the severity of his injury. He had actually fallen the night before down a small flight of stairs. Little did he know that a good Samaritan picked him up and brought him inside his apartment.

The pain began to cloud his former thinking as the good Samaritan knocked on his door. He could not get up to answer the door so he yelled; "come in!"

The good Samaritan asked how he was feeling and described his condition the night before. The good Samaritan and the young man were neighbors and he had witnessed the young man's deteriorating life right before his eyes but told him; "I didn't think it was any of my business, but when I witnessed your destitute state last night, I felt compelled to at least bring you in the house and try and make you comfortable."

"I didn't even know we were neighbors," said the young man.

"I'm not surprised. It seems to me you aren't aware of much that goes on around you. I watched you stumble across the street the other night and you were nearly struck by a car."

The good Samaritan stayed and talked to the young man. Not judgmentally but in an effort to help him guide himself away from this life he found himself in. The young man picked up on his genuine concern and believed that he truly cared.

The young man had to wear a neck brace and be immobile for sometime. During his recovery the good Samaritan became a good friend. The young man was determined to change his life and his new friend hoped he would and encouraged him to do so.

He quit drinking and running around at 24. Enrolled in college at 26 and graduated at 29. The young man asked his new friend, "why did you help me and stay with me through all of this?"

"Because I was once you at one time in my life. I knew all the pitfalls, the feelings and how life can be much better.....if only someone would give you a chance!"

The focus was on the pain and not the vice. Perhaps in life there are some things that become so painful they may cause one to redirect their thinking.

1 Corinthians 6:7-11 (Slide 7)

7 Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated? 8 No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren! (Slide 8) 9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, (Slide 9) nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

The work to change seems to be ongoing but can be accomplished. Apostle Paul points out the major changes they have made but states you still have a ways to go.

The Brethren in Thessalonica made a significant change:

1 Thessalonians 1:9 (Slide 10)

For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

They went from serving idols to serving God and you can believe that this was a very difficult change to make considering that they were likely surrounded by idol worshippers.

The drunk who wants to change must not surround themselves with others who pose that temptation to them.

Titus 3:1-8 (Slide 11)

1 Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, 2 to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. 3 For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, (Slide 12) serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. 4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy (Slide 13) He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

(Slide 14) 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. These things are good and profitable to men.

When we understood something better we changed!! Anyone who has become a genuine Christian knows exactly what it means to “turn around” and give up practices that hurt the body, soul and mind.

One can change. It takes a discipline that is often mind over body and mind over doubt.

- If you truly believe you can change you will
- Replace bad habits with good ones
- Adopt a positive attitude
- Understand change is hard work so develop perseverance

- Change your life by changing your friends (***“Bad company corrupts good morals”***)
- Stop making excuses-sometimes people work harder to convince themselves their excuses are legitimate just so they can lay their head down on their pillow at night to sleep
- Own up to our mistakes and face them

We have heard it said and perhaps we have said it ourselves-*“everyone makes mistakes”* but genuine sorrow leads us away from a terrible end when we confess our mistakes.

King David was truly sorrowful for his bad choices and God recognized his true sorrow and repentance:

2 Samuel 12:13 (Slide 15)

So David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.”

And Nathan said to David, “The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.

It was by God’s Grace that he was spared yet David never forgot or got over his shame:

Psalms 51:4 (Slide 16)

Against You, You only, have I sinned,

And done this evil in Your sight—

That You may be found just when You speak,

And blameless when You judge.

People truly can change! They can be sorry, remorseful and willing to prove the change in their life. It is often those who knew them in a former life who can’t believe their change nor do they sometimes want to believe it!! They preferred them the way they were. Yet, those who have truly changed are often greater mentors than those who have had little experience in change!!

Invitation

You can make a change and a change that affects your eternity. If you have a desire to become a child of God by being immersed in baptism, we are here to help you.

If you have any need we certainly have the desire to help.....

Please let us know how we can help you.....

Reading

Psalm 51:1-13

***1 Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to Your lovingkindness;
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,
Blot out my transgressions.***

***2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.***

***3 For I acknowledge my transgressions,
And my sin is always before me.***

***4 Against You, You only, have I sinned,
And done this evil in Your sight—
That You may be found just when You speak,
And blameless when You judge.***

***5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
And in sin my mother conceived me.***

***6 Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts,
And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.***

***7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.***

***8 Make me hear joy and gladness,
That the bones You have broken may rejoice.***

**9 Hide Your face from my sins,
And blot out all my iniquities.**

**10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.**

**11 Do not cast me away from Your presence,
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.**

**12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.**

**13 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners shall be converted to You.**

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