



# gracefellowship

Series: What About the Change?  
Date: October 22, 2024

Title: Changed to Do Good  
Passage: Ephesians 2:1-10

Scripture Reading: John 3:1-21

When my kids were younger we had a friend who gave us caterpillars in a little clear plastic cup. She would include ragweed for the little guy to eat and we would watch this little caterpillar grow until one day he climbed to the top of the cup, spun a chrysalis- it's not a cocoon, it's the caterpillar's own body! Inside the chrysalis the caterpillar basically breaks down it's own body as everything about the caterpillar is liquefied except for a few key components of life. At the end of the metamorphosis a butterfly escapes from the chrysalis. This isn't a different version of the caterpillar, it's a new creature. The caterpillar is gone and the butterfly is here.

Now, why do I want to start today talking about caterpillars and butterflies?  
Because when a person becomes a believer in Jesus the Bible describes a change taking place in us that sounds very similar to the butterfly.

## **The Bible calls believers in Jesus NEW CREATIONS.**

I want us to spend time this morning looking at 2 Corinthians 5 and describing the change that God brings about in the life of a Christian as we follow Him. Just so we are all on the same page in this series, let me explain why we are asking the question: What About the Change?

Jesus desires for every person on earth to follow Him and be part of His Kingdom. But for all who do follow Him there needs to be an awareness that God meets you where you are as a sinner, but He refuses to leave you there. The New Testament is going to paint picture after picture of the changes that result in the life of a person who is following Jesus and surrendered to His Lordship. If there is no change, is there truly salvation?

In 2 Corinthians we are going to find Paul describe the change that takes place in the life of a believer and what that results in.

**:: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21**

**14 For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.**

**15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.**

**16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.**

**17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!**

**18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:**

**19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.**

**20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.**

**21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

Paul tells us in verse 15 that one of the earliest changes that takes place in the life of a follower of Jesus is that we no longer live for ourselves, but we live for Jesus. In our lost-ness we are the god of our life. We do what we want, when we want, how we want.

**Rebellion against God generally plays out in selfish acts.**

We are all born with a selfish, rebellious heart set against God. So how do we ever overcome that and re-enter a relationship and fellowship with God?

**15 And he (Jesus) died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.**

Our first change in the life we have in Christ is a change to live for Jesus rather than ourselves. In our faith we live for a higher power and authority Who deserves our allegiance.

My faith in Jesus begins changing me by recognizing I am not the highest authority in my life. So I begin asking different questions:

- What do I want? Becomes...What does God want for me?
- Where do I want to go? Becomes...Where does God want me to go?
- How do I feel about this? Becomes...How does God feel about this?

The old mindset is that you are most important.

The new mindset is that God is most important.

Paul is going to tell us in the next part of this passage how we ever get to a place where we are able to yield to the Holy Spirit and be changed to think and act and feel in the ways Jesus does.

**:: 2 Corinthians 5:17**

**17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!**

**In Christ we are NEW CREATIONS!**

Look at the language Paul uses: he says the old has gone- it's vanished, no more to be seen- and the new is here (active and present). The ugly worm-like caterpillar has been changed into a new, beautiful butterfly. This is a radical and total change God makes in our hearts and minds.

We can miss this if we aren't careful:

**Jesus didn't come to make us better versions of ourselves; He came to make us new creations, restoring the broken image of God in our lives.**

Let's answer a few questions this may bring up:

1. What does it mean to be a new creation?
2. Do I have a role to play in the process, or is that fully a work of God?

**What does it mean to be a New Creation?**

- **It means we are changed and we are being changed!**

Being a new creation doesn't mean turn over a new leaf or getting your act together. Remember, God doesn't seek to make us better versions of ourselves. He seeks to make us new, returning to His image.

In John 3 we have the famous story of Jesus meeting with Nicodemus. They meet at night because Nicodemus is afraid of being seen by his Pharisee counterparts with Jesus. In this encounter Jesus gives Nicodemus the key to becoming a new creation.

**:: John 3:1-8**

**1 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council.**

**2 He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."**

**3 Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."**

**4 "How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"**

**5 Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.**

**<sup>6</sup> Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.**

**<sup>7</sup> You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'**

**<sup>8</sup> The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."**

I know this is a pretty familiar passage to a lot of us and when we read this it isn't new and shocking information. But for just a minute I want you to imagine what it's like to be Nicodemus and being the very first person on planet earth to hear someone say, "...no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are *BORN AGAIN!*"

You may have had the same reaction Nicodemus had when he asked questions about being born again:

"How can someone be born when they are old? Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb."

Here are the problems with that:

1. She's really old.
2. I'm really big.
3. Just...EW! That's gross!

What Nicodemus doesn't realize is that Jesus isn't talking about physical birth. Being born again and becoming a new creation is a spiritual birth. God doesn't change us physically, He changes us spiritually.

Jesus even says, "Flesh gives birth to flesh." That's natural, physical life. "But the Spirit gives birth to spirit." That's spiritual life- a rebirth that only the Creator can bring about. The best picture we have of this in the Christian faith is baptism. In the waters of baptism we see this beautifully shown as someone goes into the water and we proclaim, "You are buried with Christ in His death." Then they are brought up out of the water and we say, "You are raised to walk in new life."

The picture within baptism is the death of the old man, the sinful person, laid in the grave with Jesus. But we don't remain in death, we are raised to a new life in the power of the Holy Spirit.

That brings us to the second question:

**Do I have a role to play in this change or is it the work of God?**

The answer is, "Yes!" Being changed into a new creation is the work of God and you have a role to play.

**:: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21**

**<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!**

**18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:**

**19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.**

**20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.**

**21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

There are three things that happen in rebirth and becoming a new creation in Christ.

**1. Justification- Change that is fully the work of God.**

Paul tells us in verse 18 that all this is the work of God. He reconciled us to Himself through the work of Jesus on the cross. This is what we talked about last week: you can't earn your salvation- it is the gift of God.

**2. Sanctification- Change that is in partnership between the Holy Spirit and each believer.**

In Colossians 3 Paul addresses this partnership between individual believers and the Holy Spirit.

**:: Colossians 3:1-14**

**1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.**

**2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.**

**3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.**

**4 When Christ, who is your<sup>[a]</sup> life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.**

**5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.**

**6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.<sup>[b]</sup>**

**7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.**

**8 But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.**

**9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices**

**10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.**

**11 Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.**

**12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.**

**13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.**

**14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.**

In these verses we see that we have responsibility to take off sinful attributes and put on godly attributes. As the Holy Spirit shows us the places in our lives that need work, we are continually being made into a new creation as we put effort into the process of getting rid of some things while learning to clothe ourselves with other qualities and traits that help us bear the image of God.

The final aspect of being made a new creation in Christ is...

**3. Glorification- Ultimate change that is fully the work of God.**

This is what happens when Christ returns and we are given our glorified bodies which we will enjoy for eternity in the presence of God when He restores all of creation to it's original, perfect state.

Throughout this series I want you to hear stories from people in our church who have been changed by Jesus and are in the ongoing process of being changed as new creations. Today as we close our time together I want you to hear the story of how Jesus changed the life of Kyle McHolland.

I Have Been Changed: Kyle McHolland

Life Group Discussion Guide:

Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-21