



Advertisers spend billions of dollars each year trying to persuade people to change to use their product. Politicians and political groups spend millions of dollars trying to persuade you to vote a certain way. Religious groups spend millions upon millions of dollars trying to persuade people in one direction or another. The reason all these dollars are being invested is because those in charge know full well that the people being reached by their ads and propaganda are capable of making changes in their lives.

Doctors will often advise their patients to eat a healthier diet, or get more exercise. They understand that many patients will not make the changes they suggest, but they know that if they do not educate and encourage them about the need to change then the unhealthy pattern will be more likely to continue.

In Acts 6, just before Stephen was stoned to death, one of the accusations made against Stephen was this, "for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us" (Acts 6:14, emphasis added, sv). The accusers of Stephen did not want to change. But Stephen taught them based upon the fact that they had the ability to change. We know that one of them, Saul of Tarsus, did change (Acts 9). A diamond in the rough looks like many other stones that is jagged and dull. It is only after careful planning, then many hours of cutting and polishing that this average looking, ugly stone may become a beautiful diamond.

God's call for sinners to repent is a call to change. Sinners are to put to death the old man of sin and bury him in the waters of baptism. That person who does this in faith will rise up out of that watery grave to a new life, having been born again by the blood of Jesus Christ (Romans 6:3-7; John 3:3, 5; Revelation 1:5). This is change; but it is only the beginning.

God's children are to continue growing and changing. Peter wrote, "desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). That growing and changing is to continue past "childhood." "[B]ut grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18).

Solomon wrote, "The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, But the LORD tests the hearts" (Proverbs 17:3). In similar fashion Peter said, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:6-7).

Every Christian should look within his or her own heart and see if he or she has reached "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13-16). Having not yet reached that full measure of Christ's stature it is necessary to see where growth is yet lacking and work to change to become more like Jesus Christ in every way. May God help us to (1) see the need to change, and (2) have the courage and commitment to change.

God believes you can change. Do you?

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