

If God Doesn't Do It, It Won't Get Done

When we enter into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, something wonderful happens: God begins to change our desires, and we want to be more like Him. That is good news!

However, there's one important lesson we need to learn—we *cannot change ourselves*. In fact, trying to bring about change in our own strength will always lead to frustration. I learned this lesson firsthand...

I Tried and Tried

When I read God's Word and saw all of the areas of my life that needed improvement, I immediately *went to work*, trying to change myself into a good Christian. I tried to improve my mouth, my mind, my behavior, and every other area that didn't measure up to perfection. However, my efforts were in vain. It seemed like every other day I was giving up!

For instance, if I didn't get my way when I wanted something, my automatic response was to get upset. I often used anger and self-pity to manipulate people to do what *I* wanted. So I decided that things were going to be different ...

I have always been determined, so I decided I would simply use my willpower to be a better person. Yes, you can probably guess what happened—I *didn't get any better*. In fact, I think I actually got a little *worse*. I was so harsh with my kids that I couldn't even tell them to take out the trash without sounding like a drill sergeant!

Finally, I became so tired of being upset and frustrated that I cried out to God. I said, "Lord, I can't do this anymore. I have done everything I know to do, and nothing is working. If anything is going to change, *You* are going to have to do it!"

Almost immediately, God spoke to my heart and said, "Great! Now *I* can go to work."

And that's just what He was waiting for—for me to stop *trying* to change myself and start *trusting Him* to change me.

Let God Work It Out

During this time, there were a couple of scriptures that completely transformed the way I looked at things ...

Philippians 2:12 says to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (NIV). But look at what the next verse says: "[Not in your own strength] for it is God Who is all the while effectually at work in you [energizing and creating in you the power and desire], both to will and to work for His good pleasure and satisfaction and delight" (verse 13, AMP).

This is powerful! You and I *cannot* change ourselves, but we can spend time seeking the One who *can* change us. As we regularly spend time reading God's Word and talking to Him in prayer, we put ourselves in position for Him to do things in our lives we could never do on our own.

All God wants us to do is get into agreement with Him. He wants us to say, "Lord, I see this area in my life that You are showing me, and I agree that it needs to change. However, I am powerless to do it. *If You don't do it, it won't get done.*"

This is what it means to "work out" our salvation. We cooperate with the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to work *out* of us our ungodly traits and work *into* us the character of Christ.

Little by Little

Second Corinthians 3:18 (AMP) says, "And all of us, as with unveiled face, [because we] continued to behold [in the Word of God] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into His very own image in ever increasing

splendor and from one degree of glory to another; [for this comes] from the Lord [Who is] the Spirit.”

Let’s look at the last part of this scripture again. It says God will change us “from one degree of glory to another.” What does this mean? It means that *little by little*, He will transform us and renew our thinking by His Word.

In the early years, I had a lot of problems. So I sought the Lord, asking Him to change me. I read the Bible, studied specific scriptures, and prayed. Yet, in the beginning, it seemed as though things were barely changing at all.

But, sure enough, as time passed, all those little changes began adding up. And before long, I could finally see a visible difference in my behavior. I wasn’t where I *wanted* to be ... but I was making progress.

That is when the Lord encouraged me to declare good things about the progress I was making. I started saying, “I’m not where I want to be, but thank God I’m not where I used to be. I’m OK and I’m on my way!”

Satan wants us to constantly focus on everything that is *wrong* with us and look at how far we still have to go. But God desires for us to rejoice in how far we have already come.

No matter where you are on your journey, one thing is for sure—*God is on your side*. He is the One Who brought you into relationship with Him ... and He is the One Who will change you and help you make progress—from *one degree of glory to another*—throughout every season of your life.

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