

Lifestyle Changes without a Crisis

Changes in life can be voluntary or involuntary; and they do not need to cause an emotional crisis when they happen. During a virus shutdown, for example, change is forced upon us; but the Spirit of Christ can help us navigate through it and other changes without major emotional trauma. The remedy is found in the inner rest that Christ can produce within us if we allow Him to. It enables us to move from one circumstance to another with relative ease. Our job is to release, to Christ, our excessive attachment to things, which is called lust; otherwise, change becomes difficult if we are too attached to our present circumstances. When our peace comes from God, change does not feel so bad. When we depend on other things for our contentment, it is difficult when they are removed from us or disappoint us.

2Peter1:4 speaks of “having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” The inner peace from the Holy Spirit is what keeps us detached from this world. It creates a buffer between us and the world. Our thoughts need to be lightened by God’s peace in order for this to happen because they are difficult to control when they are our only mode for looking at ourselves and the world around us; “And let the peace of God rule [be the umpire] in your hearts (Colossians 3:15). Without God, we are oppressed by our thoughts. The law of sin that Paul describes in Romans 7:14 thru 8:2 has weakened us in relation to our thought and emotional life. We are all born with this deficiency. This is what makes us prone to excessive worry, anger, unforgiveness, addictions, and compulsions. The entire fruit of the Spirit enhances our emotional well-being (Galatians 5:22-23).

Proverbs 3:5 tells us to “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding”. Isaiah

55:6-9 says: "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." This is basic to any understanding of how God infuses His grace and peace into us. He wants unconditional trust from His creation; otherwise, we are left to struggle on our own.

This principle is operative in both the Old and New Testaments (see Philippians 4:6-7, 1Peter 5:5-7, Psalms 37:7, 55:22, and Isaiah 26:3-4). In the New Testament we are told to be anxious for nothing by casting all of our care on the Lord. The resulting peace of God that passes all understanding keeps our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. It sufficiently distances us from our thoughts so that they do not overwhelm us and keep us inordinately attached to the things of the world. This peace is ultimately imparted to us through Christ when His Spirit is within us (see Matthew 11:28-30). He does not do it from a distance. Christ shares His own peace and rest from the Father with us when we unconditionally trust in Christ.

God's peace, through Christ, provides us with liberty from the dominance of our sin nature (2Corinthians 3:17 and Galatians 5:1). Galatians 5:13 tells us that "ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another". Liberty in Christ frees us to apply agape love to everything. It is a dispassionate divine love which does not have limitations or qualifications; and it can be applied to everyone and everything, including ourselves and our own needs. It provides love for ourselves as well as our neighbor. It is also imparted to us by the Spirit of Christ along with the remaining fruits of the Spirit. The entire fruit of the Spirit brings about our transformation.

No political or economic ideology can do this, as much as it may try. Attempts to use them for this purpose are doomed to failure because only Christ has made provision for this level of transformation.

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