

## New Beginning



In 2 Corinthians 5:17 Paul writes, *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”* We assume that Paul was referring to the transformation that takes place with the acceptance of Jesus as “Lord of Your Life”. Isaiah wrote in his book 43:19, *“Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”* He too was striving to illustrate how God would bring about a new structure that would make the old pale in it's wake.

If you didn't know it, Bob Dylan told us back in 1964, “The Times They Are a Changing”, although since the advent of the “Digital Age”, change is occurring at a lightening pace. What must be understood though, is that external change doesn't imply internal change. Both Paul and Isaiah were discussing internal change and how that change would produce modifications in our external and internal lives. There is however, a dark side to this change, where advancement leads us to believe our power is greater than we think it to be. Job 5:12-14 says, *“He thwarts the plans of the crafty, so that their hands achieve no success. He catches the wise in their craftiness, and the schemes of the wily are swept away. Darkness comes upon them in the daytime; at noon they grope as in the night.”*, we call it the “World Wide Web” and rightly so for many have been entangled in it, some not even aware of their entanglement.

John chapter 9 tells us the story of the Man Blind From Birth. The disciples thought there was Sin involved, Jesus corrected them, explaining that wasn't true. Interestingly, Jesus said he had been made blind to show what God could do, which says to me that your afflictions may have a reason for being. As we read on, Jesus spits in the man's eyes and after washing he is able to see. Whada ya know!! Getting vision that you never had must have been a huge blessing. We take vision for granted, not having it isolated him from much of the world and receiving it has to have had an enormous impact on him. There's a problem here, the man was fixed by Jesus, a man that the establishment didn't think very highly of and association with Him meant excommunication from the then church and banishment from much of that society. At this point the Clergy even question his blindness by calling in his parents to verify it and Jesus' ability to perform this act but to no avail.

This is where we see how Paul and Isaiah's message plays out. Jesus made an external change in this mans life and now he is sighted, however, that change produced an internal transformation that gave him the courage to oppose the Clergy and even dispute them. It turns out that the Clergy didn't need much to denounce Jesus and doing work on the Sabbath was a biggie. So, I guess in this case the man's vision took second place to the Sabbath but to Jesus this man and his new found vision was important, such that He searched him out to reinforce the transformation and proclaim His mission of awarding spiritual sight to the blind and withholding it from the so-called sighted. Because the man not only saw who Jesus was but what He was, he received more than sight.

Mark chapter 5 tells us of a demon possessed man. It's important to know that the account doesn't explain what demon possession amounted to then but it did describe how it had made the man's life intolerable for him and those near him. Jesus shows up, has an interaction with the demons and the man, discharges the demons and voila, the man is changed from a wild, unmanageable person to a calm, orderly one. Through this external change though the man recognized what Jesus was and the account describes how that brought about a transformation such that he wanted to accompany Jesus in His travels. Jesus had other plans for this person and assigned him the task of informing those people who he would hang out with just what Jesus was.

It's interesting that most of the people who where involved in each of these dioramas except for the central figure were either frightened, annoyed or outraged but those are the circumstances that Jesus

experienced throughout His entire ministry. So what kind of circumstances do you experience when you discuss Jesus or do you just dummy up and never say anything.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee but he had seen Jesus in a different light than his colleagues, when he confronted Jesus, He offered something that Nicodemus had not considered. In John chapter 3, Jesus tells Nicodemus that he needed to be “Spiritually Transformed” (Born Again). Nicodemus had never heard of the concept and was very confused. Jesus scolded him for being in his position and not having this piece of knowledge, Jesus went on to explain how He had performed external changes on multiple individuals yet there had been no acknowledgment of what it would take to accomplish all of these achievements. Jesus goes on to explain what the future holds for Him and what that future means for humanity. Apparently Nicodemus had no response to His diatribe.

The Bible does offer some insight into how Jesus' feelings were around the immediate results of His ministry. When Jesus arrived at the residence of Mary and Martha they both expressed a limited belief of Jesus' ability that combined with the emotion of the mourners led Jesus to “Weep”, more likely than not because He expected greater faith on the part of the two women. In Matthew chapter 23 Jesus imposes seven woes to the leadership of the Jews and then in sadness declares that if only those inhabitants had come to Him all this would not have happened. Luke chapter 17 talks of 10 Lepers who confronted Jesus begging for mercy and ultimately cured of their disease, but only one acknowledged the healing and Jesus expressed disappointment in the others who didn't.

Perhaps we are more like the 10 lepers than we would like to admit. Leprosy even today is a death sentence and literally eats you alive. These men asked for “Mercy” Jesus gave them “More”, He gave them “Healing” but this healing was an external change from affliction to cleanness and the removal of the sentence of physical death. For nine of the ten men that was sufficient, only one of the ten returned to thank Jesus and express his appreciation and praise for what had just happened. Jesus said, *“your faith has made you well”*. But wait wasn't he already healed even before he came back, just as were the other nine? What we're seeing here is “Transformation”, once the man “Saw” that what had just happened wasn't a “Stroke of Luck” or some sort of “Medical Magic” but rather Jesus performing His “Salvational Skills”, Jesus proclaimed him “Eternally Well” synchronously with the physical healing.

Which leper are you? Are you one of the nine who accepted the healing and then continued on their merry way or are you the one leper who recognized that Jesus had made an enormous transformation in his life and was compelled to acknowledge that change? This kind of vision involves “Seeking”, and Jesus said, *“seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness (Transformation), and all these (External) things will be added to you”*, we're all looking for “The Kingdom” and while we can't achieve “His Righteousness”, that shouldn't prevent us from seeking it, the transformation it will impart and recognizing His good will.