



CHANGE AND CHOICE

By Dr Cecil Stewart OBE

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What do you need to change in your life? Your relationships, health, finance, business or job?

This hope builder is all about bringing good change into your life. We have experienced good change when we went from employing 9 people to 1,900 in over 30 locations and became the largest privately owned nursing home group in Northern Ireland or in the UK.

Psalm chapter 27 v 13 – 14 – shows how David would have given up hope and fainted unless he had believed for better days. **Dark days and hopelessness can be changed through faith, vision and unity.**

Evelyn and I had been in dark days of sickness

and hopelessness just as we were about to make the greatest decisions of our lives - marriage and life-long career choices.

Evelyn a nurse and I a businessman were planning our marriage when Evelyn was diagnosed with cancer and I with TB and severe anxiety. This was totally opposite to what we had known in previous years. Just after Evelyn qualified as a nurse she was delighted and optimistic about life, and I, a successful businessman, full of enthusiasm and great expectation about the future. **But now it looked like our good days were over and plans for our wedding may never materialise.**

However, we discovered that no matter how dark the day and how hopeless the situation, by the grace of God we can create a climate for good change by the choices we make. So we chose to go with God's plan and went ahead with the wedding even though we were in a huge storm and there was no natural evidence

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that our health challenges were being overcome, in fact the specialist told Evelyn to let her intended husband know that because of the treatment she was having it could destroy any hope of her having children.

I was told I would have to go to the sanatorium for at least 6 months to receive treatment for TB. Evelyn knew that there was no cure for the type of cancer she had and the text books said that most patients died within 2 years.

It is important to point out that even after our decision to go ahead with the wedding, severe anxiety still raged in my mind but I had peace in my heart. **Colossians chapter 3 v 15** – ‘and let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which you were called in one body; and be thankful’.

So even when storms rage in our minds peace

“ *So even when storms rage in our minds peace can keep our hearts if we will continue to make right choices regardless of feelings.* ”

can keep our hearts if we will continue to make right choices regardless of feelings. That really is what faith is all about. See **2 Corinthians chapter 5 v 7**, ‘we walk by faith and not by sight’.

John chapter 14 v 27 shows Jesus has left us His peace and **Ephesians chapter 2 v 14** reveals that He is our peace. So we are not depending on our own ability to stay in peace, all we have to do is open our hearts and minds to Jesus, the Prince of Peace, and let Him be Lord of our lives daily. See **Romans chapter 10 v 9 – 10** and **Ephesians chapter 2 v 8**.

Change comes and it appears we have no choice but **Deuteronomy chapter 30 v 19** says we can choose life. Circumstances change, people change, seasons change **but it is our response to change that matters most.**

When bad change comes, like sickness, strife, financial lack and loss, we can

either adopt an attitude of a victim and magnify the circumstances over our present and future, or we can **check the origin of this change** to see if it is God's will, man's will or the work of the enemy. We can do this by going to God's word, which is the foundation for our faith and then take a strong stand upon His promises, for example, **James chapter 1 v 16 – 17** reveals that we don't have to be deceived but know that every good and perfect gift comes from the Father.

John chapter 10 v 10 shows how the enemy comes to kill, steal and destroy but Jesus came to bring life abundant. **Ephesians chapter 5 v 17** invites us not to be unwise but to know the will of God.

2 Timothy chapter 1 v 7 says that He has not given us a spirit of fear, but of love, power and a sound mind.

“...we struggled to overcome ... but by His grace and faith we experienced victory...”

There are many more scriptures that show clearly what the will of God is and so we must turn aside from all doubt and focus on God's living word so that **we can refuse change that is not of the Lord** and receive good change that brings life, power and purpose, knowing God loves us and wants the best for His children.

When Evelyn and I were under severe attack from the enemy we struggled to overcome, especially when the trial went on for a long time. But by His grace and faith we experienced victory and have been able to share our testimony with multitudes over the years.

Trials and tests come to all of us but we can grow stronger in the midst of the struggles when we keep our mind and heart renewed through His word.

Hebrews chapter 12 v 11 reveals how no trial for the present seems joyful but afterward it yields good fruits and **Revelation chapter 12 v 11** shows how

they overcame the enemy by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony.

In **John chapter 16 v 33** Jesus Himself exhorts us to be of good cheer even though we are coming through trials and tribulation.

I heard about this little girl who asked her mother for an unusual Christmas present, she wanted a torch. On Christmas morning she opened the parcel and found the torch but when she switched the torch on she said 'I can't see any light coming from this torch'. Her mother replied 'a torch is for using in the dark'. The little girl said 'Ok mummy, let's find some darkness'. Likewise, we need to shine the light of the Gospel in this dark world where people are hurting. See **2 Corinthians chapter 4 v 3**.

When we shine the light

“ *...we need to shine the light of the Gospel in this dark world where people are hurting...* ”

of hope and love to others we walk in greater light ourselves. **Acts chapter 10 v 38** reveals how Jesus went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. So we see that it is satan who causes oppression. **We benefit so much by taking our attention off ourselves and our problem and start blessing others.** That is what Jesus did when we all turned to our own way.

Romans chapter 5 v 8 – says 'while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us'.

Negative thoughts can be so discouraging if we express them because speaking them gives them power, but when we refuse to speak those thoughts they have no power and they must leave.

I like the example that someone used recently about checking in at the airport, if there is anything suspicious in our baggage we are immediately searched and any dangerous items are removed; we need to also put our thoughts through security and rather than letting all kinds of thoughts of fear, unbelief, worry and even negative attitudes towards others

through, we need to arrest them right away and remove them from our baggage.

1 Corinthians chapter 13 v 8 reminds us that love never fails, so when we let the love of God flow through us we bring good change to ourselves and those we are connected with and reach out to.

Remember love is stronger than selfishness or hatred. Faith is stronger than fear and light is greater than darkness.

Romans chapter 12 v 21 exhorts us not to be overcome with evil, but to overcome evil with good.

The evil of disease and anxiety was overcome in our lives through letting the light of God's word shine and the darkness had to leave. The day came when the ashes of hopelessness turned to the beauty of health and today we are

blessed with children and grandchildren. To God be all the glory and honour!

Knowing that we can choose our thoughts and talk gives us power to bring good change. **The power of course is in God's living word and when we meditate upon it and speak it that is what brings good change.** This is how Jesus overcame satan in the wilderness, when He had been alone fasting and praying for 40 days and nights. **Every time the enemy came against Jesus He replied with the words 'it is written...'**, see **Matthew chapter 4 v 4.**

Satan has no answer to God's word and this is what brought us out of the wilderness of disease and depression, into a brand new day. So we can choose to build ourselves up on God's word in advance of any attack or adverse change.

1 Timothy chapter 6 v 19 exhorts us to lay a good foundation against the time to come. There is something we can do to

“ Remember love is stronger than selfishness or hatred. ”

keep strong and stable in the good times and the bad times.

Isaiah chapter 40 v 28 – 31 reveals that when we spend time in fellowship and waiting on the Lord our strength is renewed and we can mount up on wings like eagles. I remember sharing in Limerick, Southern Ireland how that our problem is not really the problem; it is our attitude to the problem that is the problem. That simple statement changed one man's life radically, who I met a long time after and he shared his story with me.

Hebrews chapter 4 v 12 reminds us that God's word is alive and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. When we begin to speak it and act upon it light increases and recovery comes. **Many people miss out on receiving the blessings of good change because they allow feelings to focus**

“*...we have been given superior weapons to bring down strongholds that satan has built...*”

them on their problems.

When I was very ill with TB and depression **Psalm chapter 40** was a great strength to me, David said 'I was in a horrible pit, but He brought me up and He gave me a new song'.

When we change our thoughts and talk it brings us forward into the light, just like walking on a dark night and a sensor light comes on as we move toward it.

2 Corinthians chapter 10 v 4 – 5 is also a vital scripture, especially when we are coming through change. It reveals that we have been given superior weapons to bring down strongholds that satan has built to stop us from fulfilling our destiny. We must always remember our weapons are superior to satan's. But if we don't use them they won't do us any good.

Hebrews chapter 10 v 23 – 25 shows the importance of holding fast our profession of faith, that we speak, knowing that God is faithful who promised.

Many people want the good life but will not make the change in their talking, thinking and time management. Paul exhorted Timothy in 1 Timothy chapter 4 v 15 to give himself wholly to the word.

Creating a climate for change means getting on with living the new life even when we are being misunderstood and criticised. **We must stop staring into the dark and turn on the light, through speaking in line with God's word. Psalm chapter 119 v 130** says 'The entrance of Thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple'.

Ephesians chapter 5 v 19 exhorts us to sing and make melody in our hearts unto the Lord. I remember when we were growing up as children, even though we had not heard the word much in church, my mother shared a verse in **Romans chapter 8 v 6**

which says 'to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace'. That means if we let our minds focus only on the material realm and things that are negative it will bring death, but focusing on the word will bring life and peace.

We do ourselves a great favour when we develop an attitude of gratitude and have our focus on the plan God has for us and not on our problems. When we fill our minds with the love of God we won't have any room for doubts and fear.

Proverbs chapter 4 v 23 tells us to 'keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.'

When we follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and the word of God we will always have an advantage over the enemy and adverse circumstances. **Remember, good change begins within!**

“ When we follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and the word of God we will always have an advantage over the enemy... ”

Here are some key points that I found most helpful when walking through turbulent times:

1. Be a solution provider

A great example of a solution provider is Thomas Edison who invented the light bulb, which allows us to see in the dark. Millions of people benefit from flying regularly because the Wright brothers persevered and put the first plane in the sky, even though they were criticised at the time. Use what you've got! Solution providers will always be in demand.

2. Be an original – Not a copy

Live out your identity and destiny daily in ministry, business and family. You were designed for a unique purpose and that is what you should be doing with your life.

“*‘He that observes the wind won’t sow; and he that regards the clouds won’t reap.’*”

3. Move through the problem to the plan

Winston Churchill once said ‘if you’re going through hell, keep going’. **Philippians chapter 3 v 14** says ‘I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus’.

Will Rogers said ‘even if you’re on the right track, you’ll get run over if you just sit there’, so we must move forward to become followers of Jesus. We must not worry about how things look and keep going in faith. **Ecclesiastes chapter 11 v 4** states ‘He that observes the wind won’t sow; and he that regards the clouds won’t reap’.

We must focus on God’s word, see **Joshua chapter 1 v 8** – ‘...meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein...’

4. Put people before profit

God loves people in spite of their faults and we can let His love flow through us daily.

5. Keep hope and honour alive

We can do this by remembering that our trials are temporary but the will of God is permanent.

6. Let your vision be bigger than your environment

See **Hebrews chapter 12 v 2** – ‘Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith’.

Other hope builders available include:

- Sights, Sounds & Seasons
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- Give It Over & Get On
- Followers Who Finish
- It's Not Over
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- Accelerate

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