

Always Changing

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Preacher: Christopher Baker

[0 : 00] You know, the words that we just sang, you know, ancient words ever true, changing me and changing you. And that's what we're going to talk about a little bit this morning is change. And I want you to turn to the book of Ephesians is where we're going to start this morning.

Ephesians chapter four. We're going to be in a couple of different places, but this is where we're going to start. Ephesians four, beginning in verse 17. And once you found that, I know you just sat down, but I'm going to ask if you're able, if you would stand as we read God's word this morning.

Ephesians chapter four, beginning in verse 17. And this is what God's word shares. This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you hereafter walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness in their heart, who being past feeling have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

But you have not so learned Christ. If so be that you have heard him and have been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus, that you put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Let's bow our heads and pray. Lord God, once again, we come to you and we just thank you that you have given us this time to be in your house. You've given us this time to read your word.

[1 : 44] And Lord, we thank you that as we read it, that we can know that every word is true from cover to cover. We don't have to wonder. We don't have to question. We can know that it is true. And Lord, we also can know that you have a message for us this morning.

And I pray, Lord, that every one of us that's here this morning would just have ears and hearts that are open to hear your word, to allow it to sink into our minds and hearts. And even more than that, to allow your word to change us, to become more and more the people that you want us to be.

So Lord, just work within us on this day. Thank you for your presence here and for the power of your word. And it's in the name of Jesus that we pray. Amen. You can be seated this morning.

You know, I said that we were going to talk about change. And the reality, when you start thinking about change, it is one of those things in life that change is inevitable, isn't it? It's unavoidable.

Is there anything that you can do in life to make sure that things aren't going to change? Is there anything you can do? Does it matter how much money you have? You get enough money and then things will never change.

[2 : 51] Is that how it works? What about you just find enough things in life that you enjoy and then things will never change? We understand that's not the way it works, is it? The reality is one of those things for us in life that is inevitable is change.

And I'll be honest, one of the things that really got me thinking about this this past week, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. We had people here taking pictures for our new church directory.

And Tammy and I on Monday got our picture taken. And, you know, after they took your pictures, those of you that were here, then you got to sit down and they showed you your picture on the screen, right? Right.

How did you all feel when you saw your picture on the screen? You know, Tammy and I, when we were looking at the pictures on the screen, I won't speak for Tammy, but I know I was looking at my picture and I was thinking, boy, it's not getting any better.

I mean, yeah, who are these two old people in this picture? Where's the one of us? Because that's the reality, isn't it?

[3 : 59] We change. There's nothing we can do about it. You know, you look at directories in the past, and you could even look at a directory four or five years ago, which doesn't seem like that

long.

Four or five years goes by in just a blink of an eye. Have you changed in the last four or five years? You know, in some stages of our life, we change more than others.

You know, you get kind of in the middle of your life, and three or four or five years can go by, and maybe there's not a lot of change. But then there's other times in your life, four or five years go by, and you change a lot.

You know, we think of kids. You look at some of the kids in the directory. Four or five years, does that make much of a difference? Yeah, I mean, it can go from just a baby like Callum, who's really watching me this morning.

Hi, Callum. You can go from little Callum, who's just sitting there watching me with big eyes. What is he going to look like in four or five years? Is he still going to be sitting on Madison's lap about this tall? No, he's going to be this tall, and he's probably going to be running around.

[5 : 00] They change quickly. It is inevitable. And is change always for the better? Sometimes, but is it always for the better?

You know, we look at little kids as they change, as they grow up, and we think all those as good changes, right? You know, they're learning to crawl, and then they change, and they learn to walk, and they have a couple words, and next thing you know, they're spouting sentences and having full conversations with you.

That's a lot of good change, isn't it? Most of the time. And you're excited about those changes. But then maybe you get a little older, and you see some of the changes that continue to happen.

Do you get as excited about those? Is there anybody that looks in the mirror or looks at your picture and says, I am so glad I've got two or three more wrinkles than I had.

That really excites me. My hair is much more gray than it was before. I am so glad about that. Is that anybody in here? I mean, change can go both ways, but it's inevitable.

[6 : 02] It's not just us. Think of all the other things in life that change. We change. Our kids change. The seasons change, don't they? Some of those changes do you look forward to?

I look forward to some of them. You know, going from winter to spring, things start to grow, and they green, and God just causes everything just to come to life. I love that. It's exciting to me.

I don't look forward to the change in the fall when it gets colder and colder and colder and windier and just... But it changes. What other things do we change in life?

Can you think of any? Put your mind in gear. What else do we change in life? What's that? Oil. You do all change the oil in your car or have it changed once in a while, right?

Why? Why don't you just put oil in it once and it's good? Well, maybe some of you do that. It's not a good idea. Why do you change it? It gets old. It wears out, and you need to refresh it.

[7 : 03] It needs changed. It's not just oil filters, air filters, whatever. Filters need changed. What else do you change in life? A room. A room. Travis is remodeling, changing a room around.

What else? Folks, come on. Think. It's evident. It's obvious. Did you change clothes today? No. You wear the same thing you had on yesterday? Or the day...

Well, okay. Maybe you go two or three days. I don't know. Why do you change clothes periodically? They get dirty. They get smelly. And you need to wash them and change them.

Do you change your sheets at home? My wife's laughing at me. My first year of college, Ron Bradford and I roomed together.

I think I brought my sheets home at Christmas to change them. I don't know. Anyway, we change things because they get dirty. Change can be good or change can be bad.

[8 : 00] It can be positive or negative. There's only one thing in life. There's only one thing that truly does not change. Do you understand that? What's the one thing that does not change? Yeah.

If you're in your Bible, you can look it up in Malachi 3, verse 6. Or we'll have it up here, I think.

Maybe. Maybe. Maybe not. Malachi 3, verse 6. It states this.

For I am the Lord, I change not. Yeah, there it is. Therefore, you sons of Jacob are not consumed. I am the Lord, I change not.

Why does God never change? Did you ever think about that? Why does God never change?

Because He's God. Yeah, but why? Why? You know, we change to make it better, right?

You change clothes because your old ones are dirty. You want them to become better. You change oil. The oil is worn out. You want to put better oil in there. We change things often to improve them.

[9 : 04] Can you improve God? No, He's already perfect. He can't change because He's already at that state of perfection. God does not change. That's something that it should give us some peace.

It should give us some confidence. It should give us some joy because don't you get tired of everything else changing? Change can be exciting, but change can also be exhausting.

But what I want us to really think about this morning is the change that happens in our lives.

Because the reality is we are changing whether we realize it or not, whether we want to or not.

Those things are irrelevant. You are changing. And I'm not talking about physically. You're all changing physically from year to year. That's, you are, like it or not.

But I'm talking inside. I'm talking spiritually. Every one of us is constantly changing. Do we understand that? We never stay in the same spot.

[10 : 06] It's impossible. You know, sometimes we think, well, I'll just get to this. You know, I've accepted Jesus. He's come into my heart. He's forgiven my sins. And so I'm good. And I'm just going to stay right there. Is that the way it works?

No, it's a continuous change. And as days go by, as years go by, the reality is we are either drawing closer to God or what's the other?

What's the alternative change that can happen? Or we're drawing away from God. One of those two things is happening. We can't stay in the exact same spot.

Life goes by. Days go by. Experiences go by. We will not stay in the same spot. It's just like if you're on a river canoeing or kayaking and there's a current on that river. And you just say, I'm going to stop paddling and I'm going to stay in the same spot.

Does it work that way? No. Doing nothing, you still change. That's our lives spiritually. We will change. But here's the question I want us to think about this morning.

[11 : 06] How are you changing spiritually? If you think about your life a year ago and you think about your spiritual life today, you've changed.

Here's the question. In what direction have you changed? Have you drawn closer to the Lord? Have you grown stronger in your faith? Or has it become stagnant?

Or has it gone the wrong direction? That's the question I want us to really think about this morning. Because it is so easy to let our faith become stagnant.

And to just think, well, I can do nothing and I'm just going to stay here. That is not the way it works. Hopefully we have a desire to grow and to change in the right direction. Hopefully we have a desire in our hearts to continually draw closer to the Lord.

That's what God wants for you. Do you know that? Jerry knows it. The rest of you know it? You know, the Bible says, draw near to God.

[12 : 08] You know what it says after that? Or draw nigh unto God. And He will draw nigh unto you. He will draw near to you. You know what that tells me? That we need to take that first step.

When we have that desire to grow closer to God and we act on that, when we draw closer to God, He's going to come towards us. That's what He wants. That's what He desires. So is that happening in your life?

And the verses that we read help us to see how that happens. Look back in Ephesians where we were, chapter 4. Look at verse 20. This is how to make sure that we change for the better.

In verse 20 it says this, But you have not so learned Christ. And then look in verse 21. If so be that you have heard Him and have been taught by Him.

There's two words in those two verses that I want you to think about this morning. Just a little bit. Any idea what those two words are? Learned and taught.

[13 : 10] What does it mean to learn? To gain knowledge. To change.

To receive information. To seek Him. And then it talks about being taught. What does that mean? What's that?

To be taught by someone. You know, what these verses are reminding us of is it's a process. Our growth closer to the Lord is a process.

You know, you think of teachers in a school year. The first day of school, do they automatically know everything that they're going to be taught that year? No. It happens over the course of the year. They learn.

They're taught. They grow. It is a process of learning more and more each and every day. As believers and as Christians, it's a process for us. Of being willing to learn and being willing to be taught by the Lord.

[14:12] Because you know what? Students have to be willing to be taught in order to learn. Do we understand that? Anyone that's a teacher out here, have you ever had a student that just doesn't want to learn?

There's several teachers out here. Teachers, have you ever had a student that really doesn't want to learn? Can you make them learn? No, it has to be a choice they make.

For you and I, we have to have a desire to learn. We have to have a desire to be taught. We should be. God wants us to be willing students. God will teach us if we're willing to learn.

It's on us. We have to be willing to learn. And then you look at the next few verses, 22, 23, and 24. And it gives us something that's up to us.

And then it tells us something that God does. Look at verse 22. That you put off concerning the former conversation, the old man.

[15:14] So it says there is something that we have to. This is our part. We have to put off something. And it says the old man. What does that mean to put off the old man? It's not talking about age.

What is it talking about? Putting off the old man. Old ways. The person you used to be. That we have to have a desire to get rid of that.

That that's our responsibility to have that desire to get rid of some of those old things that were part of our life. And sometimes we think of that in terms of just, well, up until we're saved.

And then we want to put all that off. I think this is a continual process. That we have to find things in our lives that shouldn't be there that we want to get rid of. That should always be happening for a believer.

Because here's the reality. Are you perfect? Am I perfect? No, Tammy wasn't listening because I didn't hear a no over there. None of us are perfect.

[16:16] We're far, far, far, far from being perfect. What that tells me is each one of us, that means we have things that we should have a desire to put off.

To distance ourselves from. You know, put off is an action. It's just like at the end of the day, you take off your clothes that you wore for that day.

That's an action, isn't it? It says to put off the old man. To have a desire to get rid of that. And that could be a whole lot of different things. Maybe there's some anger that you're holding on to in your life towards someone.

Maybe they did you wrong. Maybe they lied to you. Maybe they hurt you. I don't know what they did, but maybe there's some anger that you're holding on to. Do you know what God says you need to do with that anger? You need to get rid of it.

Maybe there is some hatred in your heart that you need to get rid of. Maybe there's some lying that you've done that you need to have a desire just to get out of your heart and out of your life. Maybe there's other things that you're involved in.

[17:17] Maybe there's pornography. Maybe there's an addiction of some kind that you have in your life. Maybe there's just spiritual laziness. We can get lazy sometimes, can't we? Folks, we have to have a desire to put off those things.

To put off those things, to get rid of those things, so that we can change and become more of what God wants us to be. So in verse 22, it says to put off the old man.

And again, that is a continual process. Verse 23 talks about what God will do when we do that. And be renewed in the spirit of your mind. As we put off that old man, as we have a desire to get rid of those things, do you know what God is going to do?

What does it mean to be renewed? Changed. Refreshed. Transformed. As we have that desire and we pray and we talk to God and we ask for forgiveness for those things and we try to unload these things out of our lives, God is going to renew us.

And He's going to replace that with something better. Again, that example of taking off our clothes each and every day is kind of a good example. We're getting rid of that old. And then the next day, what do you do?

[18:33] You're going to put back on, hopefully, something clean, something fresh. Your clothing is going to be renewed. Well, it's renewed when you wash it, but you know what I'm talking about.

That is what God wants to do is we have a desire as we pray and ask Him to help us get rid of these things in our life.

He's going to renew us and replace it with something so much better. Being renewed by God is an amazing thing because we get rid of that old burden. And it says that we will be renewed in the spirit of your mind.

He's going to even change the way your mind works. And you know what? Sometimes that's a wonderful thing because our minds do not always work the way God wants them to, do they? And I'm not talking about being forgetful. I'm talking about maybe when someone hurts you, what is maybe the first thought in your mind? To get even?

To get revenge? God can change those things and give us the mind that He wants us to have. The mind of Christ is what the Bible talks about. So we have to have a desire to put off these things.

[19 : 39] God will renew us. And then verse 23 talks about what gets to happen after that, or 24, excuse me. And that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness.

That means we're putting on something better. That means spiritually we can look better day after day. You know, I can almost guarantee that most of you who are adults anyway, in five years, you're probably not going to look better, are you?

I mean, realistically, are you going to look better? Probably more gray hair or less hair, period, for some of you men.

Maybe more wrinkles. Maybe you don't get around as well. I mean, physically, it's inevitable. You kind of lose a lot. But spiritually, it's different. Five years from now, one year from now, spiritually, you can be in a such better place than you are right now.

That growth can be continual. You know, physically, we gain and then we lose. That is the way life works overall. No way to avoid that.

[20 : 50] Spiritually, do you know what God wants from us? Just a continual gain. Not that we won't have some stumbles along the way, but He wants us to become mature believers, to continue to grow always, to continue to draw closer to Him.

And that's something that can continue our whole lives. It's not like we will ever get to the point where we say, all right, I'm there. I'm good. No matter how wonderful your relationship is with the Lord, do you know what?

It can get better. No matter how strong your faith is, do you know what? It can increase. That is the wonderful thing about our faith and what God wants to see in us.

And you know, the other wonderful thing is, is that God's not going to give up on you and I. Even if we have a time when we start to backslide or go the wrong direction, you know, God is always ready to say, when we reach out to Him, He's all ready to say, hey, get back on track.

Let's go. I want you to look at one other verse. I want you to look in Philippians. Philippians 1, verse 6.

[22 : 04] It's right after Ephesians. Hold on. My pages are sticking together. I'm getting there.

Philippians 1, verse 6. And this verse should be a wonderful verse that we hold on to and that fills us with hope. Being confident of this very thing.

What does it mean to be confident? You're sure of it. You know that you know that you know. Being confident of this very thing, that He which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

What does that verse really mean? God is willing to continue to work on you always. Always.

That no matter whether you've been backsliding, no matter whether you've made some mistakes, when you turn back to God and say, Lord, help me. I want to get back on track. Guess what? God say, okay, I'm ready to go. When we seek that forgiveness, do you know what God says?

[23 : 08] When we do it with sincerity, God says, okay, I forgive you. Let's get back on track. Let's keep going in the right direction. So this morning, here's a question that I want, that I need to consider and that all of us need to consider.

What direction is my spiritual life going in right now? Am I growing as a Christian? Am I growing as a believer in Jesus Christ? Is my faith growing?

Am I getting closer and closer to the Lord? Am I doing more and more of what God wants me to be doing? That's the question. So what does God want us to be doing other than just growing?

What does God expect of us? Change? To continue to change? To be people God wants us to be? To do His work? You know, yesterday I was talking with someone actually at the funeral, and they put it in a way I hadn't heard before, but I really liked it.

He says, we're supposed to love well so that then we can go tell. Doesn't that make sense? That as a believer, as we draw closer to God, as we experience His love more and more, we should share that love with others so that then we can also tell them about Jesus Christ so that they can have a relationship with Him.

[24 : 19] That's what God wants all of us to be doing. Did you realize that's part of your job description as a believer? To share with others? To spread the faith of Jesus Christ, the gospel of Jesus?

So here's the question. If you don't remember anything else, it really all boils down to this. Where's your spiritual life at right now? Is it where God wants it to be? Are you growing?

Are you growing? Is your faith increasing? And we've already looked. It comes from learning. It comes from being taught. It comes from being in the Word. It comes from having that desire to grow.

It doesn't happen overnight. It's a process. But make sure your life is going in the right direction. Make sure you're getting closer to the Lord instead of further away. And maybe this morning you think, I don't know.

I haven't really increased in my faith. I've not really grown. Change that today. Take a step towards the Lord. He's going to take a step towards you. It's His promise. God wants to see you grow.

[25 : 23] He wants to see you flourish as a believer. But it takes drawing near to Him. Stepping close to Him. My prayer is that each one of us are willing to do that.

That we're in God's Word. That we're studying it. That we have a desire to be the people that God wants us to be. And we're not going to know how to do that if we're not in God's Word. You know, the song we read earlier, Ancient Words Ever True.

I know we messed up the beginning, but that doesn't matter. Ancient words. It's talking about God's Word, that they're always true. But what did we sing after that? Ancient words ever true.

What's the next word? Changing me and changing you. God's Word is intended to change us. We need to be in God's Word so that we know the changes God wants to see in us.

This morning, where's your heart at? Where's your life at? What direction are you changing? Let's bow our heads. Lord God, I thank You for this morning.

[26 : 23] And I do thank You for Your Word. Lord, that Your Word is true. That Your Word directs us. That it instructs us. And Lord, I pray this morning that each one of us, would just take time to think about our lives spiritually.

Lord, that You would speak to our hearts this morning and help us to see the truth of whether we're growing in our faith or whether we're backsliding in our faith. Or whether it's becoming stagnant.

And Lord, I pray that each one of us would just have a desire in our hearts to be growing.

To every day be more and more the person that You want us to be. And Lord, You know that we will stumble along the way. That we have faults, we have weaknesses. There are temptations that come. But Lord, regardless of where we're at right now, help us just to reach out to You and to say, Lord, if we've stumbled, forgive us.

Help us to get back where we need to be. And I know, Lord, that You will be a faithful God. That You will forgive when it's asked for. And that, Lord, You will get us back on track. So, Lord, I just pray that we are a people that are growing, that are more and more the people that You want us to be.

And we ask and pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.