

## Roadmap for Change

Philippians 3:12-14

“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. <sup>13</sup> Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

**When was the last time you have asked yourself the question of why you come to church?** Have you really thought about that lately? Maybe some of you were invited here tonight, you are visiting with us, you have thought about that tonight: “What am I doing here? Why am I going?” **But when was the last time you have really thought through, why do you come to Mountain Grove Church? Is it the free coffee?** Do you just like the fellowship? Maybe you feel like, if you check in with God every once in a while then at the end of time you will look familiar and He will let you in.

**As pastor of this great and blessed church, my desire is that one of the reasons you come here is to bring your needs.** My prayer is that you have come with the need to be different, with the need to grow, with the need to change. That is one of the things all of us have in common, it is the need to change.

**One of the great truths that I have discovered is that, although we do not like to do it, we all have the need to change.** And in this series we have been doing, we have been talking about some of the deepest needs that we have and how God meets those needs. One of the ways we have been showing how God meets these needs is by looking at some of the names of God in the Bible. **He gives Himself a name that responds to the needs that we have.** What a mighty God we serve!

In this segment we are looking at the name Jehovah-M'Kiddish – “I am the God who sanctifies you.” “Sanctify” or “sanctification” means, “to be set apart” or “to change.”

**On any given Sunday morning we will have 100s of people coming through the doors of this church.** We will have some unsaved people who are genuine, and sincere who are checking out this God-thing, and will have some people who have been walking with the Lord for fifty-plus years that have a genuine, deep relationship with Him and everybody else in between. But that is Wednesday and this is tonight. **It doesn't matter where you are tonight because this term still applies to you.** God wants to change you. If you are already a Christian, God is changing you. **God is at work.** And the good news is that He is not done with you yet.

**A lot of people think they are not good enough to be a Christian.** And they are right. None of us are. **The good news is that you don't have to get your act together to get saved.** You come to God just like you are and *He* begins the change process. The promise is in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore for the old life is gone. A new life has begun!” Notice the words “old life” and “new life.” **When you come to Jesus, the old life is gone.** The *old life* is referring to life without relationship with Jesus Christ. It is our *old spiritual nature*. **This new life has begun with a new nature.** It is a *new life*, a new supernatural relationship with God. It is when we go from God's creation to God's child. **It is when you might go from being a sinner to somebody who is now a saint – a new life has begun.** In this *new life* we are in a *process* called “sanctification,” the process of being *changed*.

To better understand this process, listen to what Paul says about this process of change from the Greek, “I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection! (If he hadn't arrived, that is good news for us.) But I keep working

toward that day when I will finally be all that Christ Jesus saved me for and wants me to be. No, dear brothers and sisters, I am still not all I should be, but I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us up to heaven.”

**In this passage of Scripture, Paul is comparing this new life with a race. And in this race or journey or process, God wants to change us. He wants to take your discontent and change it to joy. He wants to take your insecurity and change it to peace. He wants to change our bitterness to sweetness. He wants to take our lust and change it to a genuine love. He wants to take our mean streak and transform it to goodness. He wants to take our edgy personality and transform it to patience. You see, God is in the change business. He wants to take our anger and our rage and change it to gentleness. He wants to take that which is out of control and transform it to self-control. In other words, He wants to transform our character.**

Some of you may be thinking, “That might sound nice for you because you don’t have much changing to do but you don’t know about me. You don’t know about my past and what’s going on.” You are so right, I really don’t. And I don’t understand. **But I do know me, and I do know what the Bible says, and I do know the experience I have had in my life and seen in the life of others**. There were some things in my life, some struggles in my life, that I thought I would live with forever. Satan tried to convince me that there was no way things were going to change. **Yet God has transformed my life**. He has changed my *character*. I have not *arrived*. I am not there yet. **But I can see what God has done in my life**. I used to think, “That is just the way that I am.” But, God does not take that as an answer. He does not say, “Oh well, I see that is the way I created you, and that is the way you are? Therefore, let me just back up and move over and work on other areas of your life.” God just does not work that way.

**How does God change us? How does the change process happen?**

Some of you might have started coming to church because you have seen a change in your neighbor or friend or boss or son or daughter that has been so radical you are thinking, “There is something going on out there!” Have you ever thought about how the change takes place?

**There are two extreme thoughts, neither of which are Biblical.**

**One extreme is this that the change that takes place is all God.** The idea is that God does everything. All we have to do is kind of kick back on the couch and with this theory, if I don't change, if I don't transform, God made me this way, then it is God's fault. **Somewhere in the process, evidently God messed up, therefore, I am not accountable at all.** God blew it.

**Another extreme says that God saves me but then it is all up to me to change.** I have got to work and I have got to do and I have got to transform my behavior and my personality. And the idea is that, “If it is going to be, it has to be me.” It is work, work, work, do, do, do!

**What the Bible teaches about change - the biblical position of sanctification – is that there is a “God” part and there is an “our” part.** God's part is His *power*. Our part is our *cooperation*. **We cooperate in this process of change but it is God's power, through the Holy Spirit, that gives us the ability to make the changes.** If you miss this you miss some big stuff. You see, God wants to *change us*, but He can't do it without our *desire* and *corporation*.

**Five things to think about – action steps, ideas, ways in which we might better cooperate with this process.**

1. **Recognize that your spiritual life is a journey.** God changing us is a process, not an event. It is a journey, not an overnight sensation. **Philippians 1:6 says,** “And I am sure that God who began the good work within you will continue His work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again.” **The word “began” here refers**

**to your salvation experience.** The moment you realized that you were lost and undone without Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, and you prayed this simple prayer, “Lord Jesus, I need You. Come into my life, forgive me of my sins,” **Boom!** God moves into your life in the Person of the Holy Spirit, and immediately begins a good work in your life conforming you to the image of Jesus Christ!

**The word translated “continue” refers to sanctification.** Sanctification is presented in the Bible as in three tenses – *past*, *present*, and *future*, or *positional*, *progressive*, and *permanent*. The moment we are saved, we are sanctified, that is past, or positional. **Every day of our lives we are being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, and that is present or progressive.** Ultimately, we will stand before the Lord of glory, and we shall be like Him, and that is *future* or *permanent*. Therefore, sanctification is the process, the journey.

**Have you ever been on a road trip with children?** It always starts with everybody excited, packing the car, doing stuff, and getting ready. Then you get on the road and before you get twenty miles from home what are the kids saying? “Are we there yet? How much longer until we get there?”

**That question is a sign of immaturity.** The reason that some of you walked away from church for so many years, the reason that some of your friends and family have walked away from God, turned their back on God, is because of *spiritual immaturity*. *Immature Christians* are *impatient* and *sensitive*. **They are like children except they are in the spiritual realm.** They are *easily offended by what people say* and *when they are not getting the attention they think they deserve*. And when that happens, they *pout!*

**One of the reasons we have so much of a problem is we are an instant gratification society.** We want stuff right now! We are out of control when it comes to *patience*. **How many of you push the elevator button fifteen times!** Like the elevator is down on the bottom

floor saying, “That guy on the eighth floor must really be in a hurry. Let me skip the other seven and get up there.”

The reason that we have a problem *changing* is because we simply do not understand God’s economy of time. It is very different than ours. God is not in a hurry to change us. He knows His part. He has His part. Our part is *cooperating* by being committed to His Word and will for our lives.

One part of the good news of the Christian journey is this: *we are not there yet.* You are a *work in progress.* God is not done with you yet. If you are *married that is even better news.* Some of you look at your spouse and think, “If this is as good as it gets, we are in trouble.” But I tell you it is *not as good as it gets.* We are *changing* all the time. We are all part of this journey, this roadmap to change that we are talking about.

**2. Set our sights on the *final destination.*** If you want to cooperate with God’s as He brings about changes in your life, you must set your sights on the final destination. This is basic travel etiquette – *if you do not know where you are going, you will never know when you get there.*

If you are a Christian, your final destination is to be totally conformed into the image of Jesus Christ. Another way of saying it is this: *the final destination is wholeness.* Hebrews 10:10 says, “And what God wants is for us to be made holy.” Leviticus 20:7-8 says, “So set yourselves apart to be holy for I the Lord am your God who makes you holy.” Be set apart – *that is what holiness is.* Being holy does not mean one is better or set above everybody else, it simply one is set apart from the world’s way. The final destination is the image of Jesus Christ.

One of the greatest concerns that I am asked about is, “What if I mess up?” You will. That is part of the process. If you are anything like me, you will mess up a lot. *You see, God is changing our inner*

**world, that is, He is changing us from the inside out.** We are typically **outer world people**, concerned with how we look, where we will live, what we look like. God says, “I am going to focus on the part of humanity that will last forever.” **Our bodies are decaying, but the real you is being renewed by the power of God on the inside.** He is in the process of changing us from the inside out.

**Therefore, as we talk about change, we are not talking about doing.** We are talking about being. **Inside of you is the Spirit of God, a new nature.** God is in the process of working in your will until He transforms your character.

2 Corinthians 3:18 says, “And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like Him and reflect His glory even more.” **There is a common misunderstanding with many people in church, and it is this: They want to become more religious.** But that is not true. I don’t want you to be *more religious*, I want you to become *more like Jesus!* Do not confuse religion and Biblical knowledge with the transformation of your heart.

**I love you and I love this church.** Hear me as clearly as you can. **Biblical knowledge, doctrinal awareness, and theological understanding,** are all very important. **They essential for you and I to have, so we are not blown back and forth by the winds of every belief.** But that knowledge has to go hand in hand with the desire to submit your life to the Author of this book, not just to know about Him. If you want a picture of a changed life, show me someone who manages their money and their resources the way God teaches, somebody who hungers and thirsts after knowing God so he will be translated into a genuine love for other people.

**3. Ask God to help with your roadblocks.** Roadblocks are areas of life that slow down movement. They cause you slam on the breaks of change.

One of the characteristics of these roadblocks is that they are normally hidden and unexpected. Satan sets up roadblocks that are designed to attack our character and destroy our witness. Therefore, Paul gives us this warning in 2 Corinthians 7:1, “Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence or awe for God.” What are the roadblocks that Satan uses to contaminate your character? Have you ever made a list of all the roadblocks in your life? Think of one thing, one roadblock that immediately comes to mind that stunts your spiritual growth. You name it – pride, gluttony, lust, overspending, anger, too controlling, stealing, having an affair. What is that roadblock in your life? Do you want to get past that roadblock?

Before you answer too quickly, think about it. Wouldn't some of us in here miss the powerful feeling that comes from controlling other people? We say we don't want to be controlling but it feels so good when we do. Wouldn't some of us miss the adrenaline rush when we rage and explode all over other people? Wouldn't some of us miss the excitement of sexual fantasizing if we were to really deal with our lust problem? Do you really want to get rid of that roadblock?

“Throw off your old evil nature and your former way of life, which is rotten through and through, full of lust and deception.” Most of the time when I talk to somebody about problems they go, “I know it is not right!” The problem is that the roadblocks have become so enmeshed into your life, it is going to take more than just forgiveness, you need a miracle of deliverance. It is going to take more than just a desire to remove the roadblocks, it is going to take making some hard choices, and trusting God for the grace to endure the change. Some of us are going to go to the grave constantly parked at that roadblock unless you are willing to humble yourself and take a time out and say, “God, I cannot do it on my own. I cannot remove this on my own strength. You are my only hope.”

Remember, although salvation is a onetime experience, the Christian life is a process!

**4. Learn how to refuel.** We talked about this in our last segment, but as we travel on this journey called “The Christian Life,” we need to realize that we have to take some time to refuel our spiritual gas tanks. For example, you have been driving your car in the middle of nowhere and you pass that exit that last gas station thinking you can make it, although you are running on “empty.” **You don’t stop because you were too busy, you wanted to keep on track, and your kids are talking.** And all of a sudden you are living with this stress and fear and your body tightens up because you know you might really run out. (For me I’m thinking, “Linda is going to kill me if we run out of gas!”) **That is not the kind of life you want to be living.** But yet that is exactly what so many of us do in our spiritual walk with God. We don’t take the time to refuel. We don’t take time to stay connected with God.

**I need to be refueled everyday.** I think David understood the importance of being filled when he said in Psalm 23:3, “He [God] renews my strength. He guides me along the right path.” **I need to be refueled spiritually.** I need to stay connected and in fellowship with the Master. Things work best when they are in tune with God.

2 Peter 1:3-8 gives us the result of being refueled, “As we know Jesus better His divine power gives us everything we need for living a godly life. So make every effort to apply these promises to your life. Then your faith will produce a life of moral excellence. A life of moral excellence leads to knowing God better. Knowing God leads to self-control. Self-control leads to patient endurance and patient endurance leads to godliness. Godliness leads to love for other Christians, and finally you will grow to have genuine love for everyone.”

**Don’t get the idea that this change is going to take place overnight.** The Bible says this process of change is always expressed

in the context of community – genuine love for others. That is why God is changing us so we might love others. You are never more like Christ than when you express love.

**5. Pause along the way to celebrate the progress.** If you are a Christian, God has worked in your life whether you think so or not. You may be slamming on the breaks, buried under a pile of roadblocks but God is working in your life. Listen very carefully to this statement: don't look ahead and see how far we have to go, rather, look back and see how far you have come! Ladies and gentlemen, none of us are what we ought to be, but all of us have come a long way from what we used to be. And it will do you good just to stop and thank God for the success of your journey so far.

Psalm 40:5 puts it this way, “O Lord, my God, You have done many miracles for us. Your plans for us are too numerous to list. If I tried to recite all your wonderful deeds, I would never come to the end of them.” I think many of us in here could say that if we paused, if we reflected, if we took a little bit of time out of our day or week, we could see God's work in our life. When I look at my life today, I am amazed at what God has done! Isn't it wonderful to know that is God changing your life? He is transforming your character.

Galatians 5:22-23 gives us this measuring stick for our spiritual progress, “When the Holy Spirit controls our lives, He will produce this kind of fruit in us love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

Where are you in this journey called “The Christian life”? For some of you, you need just to walk out of here with a big smile on your face. You are the poster child for change. God has done some incredible things in your life. If we looked up in the theological dictionary under sanctification, your picture would be there. You have been changed. Great! Smile!

**For some of you, you just needed to realize that the Christian life is a journey.** This segment has been helpful because every time we mess up and have been filled with guilt and frustration, remember – ***the Christian is a journey and we have not reached the finish line yet.***

Some of you have got your foot slammed on the breaks, parked in front of a roadblock and you need to say, “God, would You help me with this?” **You just need to make a choice to follow God no matter what might lie ahead, or who you might have to leave behind.** The end results are far more rewarding than the hard choices that you need to make.