

Change or Exchange

by Lewis Gregory

We must exchange our life for God's plan, not just change it, and be mindful of His presence in our daily life.

Duration: 43:09

Scripture: Jeremiah 13:22

Topics: "Exchanged Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that humans have a fundamental flaw that renders their lives worthless. God is calling for a drastic change in their lives, as mere confession of sins is not enough. The preacher highlights the need for a new creation and a vital union with Christ, which enables believers to draw life from Him and make necessary changes. The sermon concludes with the promise of God to remove the old, evil heart and replace it with a new divine heart, as stated in Jeremiah.

Transcript

We're going to talk about change or exchange. And as we saw from the story that Dennis read, God is the one who changes lives. God is the one who makes the necessary changes, physically, mentally, emotionally, in every area of our life.

He's the one who makes the changes. But as we think about this matter of change, I want us to go to Jeremiah chapter 13. And you know, God changes plans, you see.

We thought the plan was to go on that trip. Sometimes God does like he did with Abraham when he had the knife to Isaac. I just want to see if you're going to go, and I'm wanting to see if you're willing to not go and lose this money or these tickets or whatever if I say no.

I had a friend one time and said, you know, God is far more concerned about whether or not he can get us to stop than he is whether or not he can get us to start. Most of us get started, we don't know when to stop. You know, we just keep going and going, and we forget to check in with the Lord to see if he's saying yea or nay.

Jeremiah chapter 13. I want to look at a couple of verses here. I want to start with verse 22 through 25.

Jeremiah 13, 22. And if you say in your heart, Therefore come these things upon me, for the greatness of your iniquity are your skirts discovered and your heels made bare. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you also do good that are accustomed to do evil.

Therefore will I scatter them as the stubble that passes away by the wind of the wilderness. This is your lot, the portion of your measure from me, says the Lord, because you have forgotten me and trusted in falsehood. Verse 22.

And if you say in your heart, Wherefore come these things upon me? You know, as we go through life, different things happen. Let's say the cancellation of the trip. And so, we immediately are prone to ask, why is this happening to me? Lord, why did you let this happen to me? Why did you let me get sick? Why did you let my car break down? Why did you let some car run into my car? Why did you let my house burn down? Why did you let these things happen? Why? And we're so prone to ask why.

Well, first of all, part of that reason is because it's rooted in the tree of knowledge. The tree of knowledge always wants to know why. That's what I was saying about the issue of even the cancellation of the trip.

It's not about why. It's God. And Lord, we accept what you're saying and doing.

But he says, nevertheless, you have a situation and so you begin to ask, Why are these things coming upon me? Well, there is an appropriate time and place to find out what's going on. There are reasons. And we need to know.

And if we need to know, God will let us know. And so, he's saying, Now, you're looking at your life and you look at these situations and you begin to wonder, Well, what is going on here that would cause these things to happen? And then we begin to do an assessment of our life. Well, wait a minute.

I'm going to church. I'm reading my Bible. I'm doing all the right things, you know.

I'm praying. I'm giving. I'm doing what seems to be right.

So, how is it now that all these negative things are coming on me? Why is it that good things aren't coming my way? Why is this not happening for me? He's saying, Now, you ask that question. He said, Well, sometimes it's as simple as for the greatness of your iniquity. Now, we associate iniquity with sin.

And certainly, it does pertain to sin. But the uniqueness of iniquity is it has to do with a bent. It's that we're bent.

We're distorted. And so, what happens when you're bent and distorted is you go down a path that results in sin, even though you might think and intend to be going the right way. You see, if we think we're wanting to do what God wants us to do, and we're trying to do what we think God wants us to do, but it's not happening, we have to stop and say, Well, okay.

Why is it not happening? Because in that sense, it is important for us to know, not from a knowledge standpoint, but so we can correct it, so we can repent, so we can make the necessary change. And so, immediately, we start butting our head against the wall, and we find something wrong in our life, and we say, Okay, well, there's sin in my life. So then, what do we do? We immediately begin to make promises to God.

We say, God, I promise I'll never do that again. Or, I promise I'll do better. Or, I promise I'll do more of the good things to improve my life so that I can be a better Christian.

So, we begin to work at getting better. But with all of our efforts at working at getting better, we're going to see here, as Jeremiah works us through some things, it's not working out. It's not working out.

Why are all these things coming upon me? For the greatness of your iniquity. Now, iniquity has to do with unrighteousness. And so, what he's saying is, what's happening in your life is not right, because the way you're going is the wrong way.

If you don't go the right way, you're not going to get the right results. Now, we're sitting up here, and we think to ourselves, well, okay, I'm going to go to Dahlenega today. But if I head north to go to Dahlenega, guess what? You know what? If I start driving north to go to Dahlenega, I won't make it because Dahlenega is what? It's south of here.

It's not north of here. But if I think I'm going the right way, but in fact I'm going the wrong way, then I'll never get to where I'm supposed to go. And so, oftentimes, in our sincere zeal, our sincere desire to honor God and serve God with our life, we start doing things we've been told or taught or what we need to do, and it may not be what God's requiring or desiring of us.

It may not be what God is saying for us. Like you were saying about the lady needing to be healed. I mean, she tried a lot of different things, trying to connect with God to get that cure that she so desperately needed and her family needed.

But she was going to all the wrong places and finally she found the place, the right place, the place for her. Naaman, the leper, he needed healing. And here's a little Jewish girl, and she said, well, you know, I know a man that knows God and if you'll get to him, I feel sure he can do something for you.

So he went to him, went to the prophet. And the prophet said, well, I'm not even going to waste my time or my breath on this guy, so I'll send my servant out. So the servant goes out to this great general, this great champion of the army, of the conquering nation.

He says, well, the prophet said, just go down a wash in the river. You need a bath, basically. But, you know, don't stop with one time.

You've got to do it seven times. And that was pretty bad news for this big shot because he was expecting the main man to come out. He said, like, wait a minute.

I want you to roll out the red carpet here and I want some serious respect and this is pitiful. And plus, this river of yours, I've seen it and it's muddy, it's dirty, it's ugly and I've got beautiful rivers where I come from. I should be over there enjoying my beautiful river and not wasting my time in this ugly, muddy river.

But you see, it gets again to the point. What does God want? We look at life and we say, well, logically it makes sense if we go here and do this and that, you know. We try to figure out what looks like the best way to solve our problem.

And instead of discussing it with the Lord and getting what He wants, we think, well, if I just memorize some scriptures about this particular subject. Or, like one guy, he's having some marriage issues and so he's gone to all these conferences and read all these books on marriage and he was supposed to go to another one and he called up and he told them, he said, you know, I'm not going. And they said, why not? He said, I'm suffering from information overload.

He said, I have so much information already. He said, I think I need to just stay home and begin to put into practice what I've already heard and learned. Because, you see, we've got so much information, we keep taking it in, but what good does it do us? See, it doesn't result in any significant change in our daily life and

walking, yet we have to think about it.

Am I trying to change my life or do I in fact need to exchange my life? And that's what He's going to show us here because He says, look at the Ethiopian. He can't change his skin. Now, he might get some spray paint and paint his skin a different color, but it won't change the color of his skin.

You know, we can try to do a lot of things to improve, but it won't really change it. He says, oh, what about the leopard? He can't change his spots. Again, we might get some dye and dye the hair of the leopards, but it's still the same down deep inside.

It's still the same. And so He's saying, now look, if the Ethiopian cannot change the color of his skin, if the leopard can't change the spots that he has on his body, then He says, who are you to think that you can change and do good when in fact, He says, you're accustomed to do evil? Now, God is very precise in His choice of words here. He didn't say do bad.

You see, I was thinking about that this week. We have managed to adjust our terminology so it doesn't sound so bad, right? So instead of saying evil, we say bad, see? But the tree of knowledge of good and evil, see, it talks about evil. And so in God's terminology, He focuses on evil because really, He's not only just showing us how bad it is, how utterly deplorable and ungodly and wicked it is, but He's showing us there's a source behind it all that's Satan, the mastermind of all ungodliness that's at work here.

And so He's identifying the source even as He's exposing the sin for what it is. But He says there, He says that change is not possible because your orientation is evil. Now, if we go back in chapter 13, and we look up here in verse 9 and 10, So He's showing us here that there's an attitude or disposition of pride.

Now, pride is self-sufficiency, and pride has the whole thing of this is what I want, this is what I will do, this is what I can do, and it's all a very self-centered, self-seeking, self-serving attitude. It's really inherent in all of humanity. It's the survival of the fittest.

We all have that sense of self-preservation. So it's built into us, but yet it's not God's way for us. So we've got to be shed of that.

We've got to be done with that. Now, the next verse, He goes into it a little more. Okay, verse 10, Jeremiah 13, 10, Now, what had happened here was God had told Jeremiah, He says, You take this girdle, take this garment, this piece of clothing, and you go and you bury it in this hole in the ground, and you leave it there.

And so he left it there for a number of days or months, however long. And then he said, Okay, now it's time to go back and get it. But when he got it and he brought it out, he saw that it was marred.

That is, it was damaged. It was flawed, probably deteriorated from just rotting there in the ground or whatever. Nonetheless, it wasn't any good anymore.

And so what God is saying to us is sort of the same thing. He said, No, look, you don't seem to understand. You've got a basic flaw in yourself, and that flaw is such that it means that your life is good for nothing.

Now, you know, growing up, sometimes you hear your friends or your parents or maybe even a teacher back then would say to some kid, You're good for nothing. Why are you good for nothing? Ever heard that

phrase? Sure you have. Well, you're good for nothing.

Well, that's kind of tough, kind of harsh, maybe even classified as verbal abuse. And yet God is saying, if we look at the core of our being, we have to accept the fact that we're good for nothing as it pertains to God and what he deems good. Now, just think about it.

In John chapter 6, Jesus says, well, I'll just quote it for you. In John 6.63, Jesus says, The flesh profits nothing. In other words, he's saying the flesh is good for nothing.

And then in John 15.5, again, Jesus says, that without me, you can do how much? Nothing. So what he's saying to us is in reality, we in our human state, in our natural state, in our unregenerate state, apart from God, apart from our being born again by the Spirit of God, we are good for nothing. And then even to go beyond that, he still says, but while your spirit is willing, your flesh is still weak.

So what he's saying is your humanity, your essential resources that you have at your disposal are still good for nothing as it pertains to God. Only God is good and only God can do that which is good. And so it takes God to do what is necessary in our lives.

And he's trying to help the people here, as he wants to help all of us today, to realize this, that we cannot change our life. And no matter how many good things we do to improve our life, it's not going to make the essential difference because that's not where the problem is. Now in verse 25, Jeremiah 13.25, This is your lot, the portion of your measure for me, says the Lord.

Because what? You have forgotten me and trusted in falsehood. So here's what he's saying is happening. We've forgotten him.

Now you say, well wait, I haven't forgotten. God, I'm here in church, I'm here on Sunday, and I, you know. He says, no, it's not about that.

It's about how you live your life. Remember, the issue is about the way we go about things. If we're going the wrong way, we're going to end up at the wrong place.

And so it's the way we go about things that he wants us to become aware of. And so he's saying now, you have forgotten me, and what he's telling us there, for us as Christians today, is this. You've lost sight of me.

You are not conscious of me in your daily life. Your focus is not on me as you go through each day. Now yes, maybe you get up in the morning and have a quiet time.

Or maybe you have prayer at your mealtime. And you come to church on Sunday. But that's not being mindful of him.

Not in the way he's talking about. Not as in an awareness of him, his presence, his power in your life, in the details of every day of your life. So what happens? We go along through the course of the day.

And we come to something that requires a decision. Just think about yourself. Do you pause and consult the Lord about these things, or do you just go on about your way? If it looks good, you do it.

If you like it, you get it. Or do you consult God about it? Now we might talk to our friends. Now yes, you're supposed to get counsel.

God tells us that. But are we talking to them to get godly counsel about God's will? Or is it just a matter of we're concerned about their opinion and what they think? So we need to make sure that our attitude first and foremost is fixed on God, his will, and his way for my life. Now, if that's the case, then yes, enjoy your life.

Yes, make the most of everything God blesses you with. But be mindful of him. See, that's why he's saying, you've forgotten me.

He's saying, you're not really mindful of me. You're not taking me into consideration. You're not consulting with me as you go.

You're not consciously, specifically trusting me to guide and order your steps. So see, you know, I've been through some pretty impossible situations on my mission travels. And I was prepared to take money out of our savings for our retirement or whatever I had to do to go to that trip if it was of God.

But he was just saying no. There's been two times at least or maybe three where the plane has had the door shut and I couldn't get on and yet God got the door open and I got on the flight. I've been stranded in other countries where there were no flights available and yet God got me on a flight.

So I have seen God open some doors, you know. But also I've seen him close. But we have to be sure it's God opening and God closing.

And that means we have to talk to him about it and trust him with these things, whatever they might be. So it's not just if it looks good or feels good. It's if it's God.

Then it's good. Well, he says it's because you've forgotten me and you've trusted in falsehood. So to trust in falsehood means that we're relying upon that which is not God.

It didn't originate with God. It wasn't the result of God in us. It wasn't God's will for us.

We're just relying upon anything and everything but God. And he's saying if you'll just talk to me about everything and trust me with everything, then I'll take care of everything. And then it will all work out right.

No matter what it is. And remember, God's not a fuddy-duddy. He wants us to enjoy life.

But it has to be on his terms. Always in his time and always in his way. And that particular mission trip for me was not his time and it was not his way.

Some didn't understand. They never will. I don't understand.

I may never. But that's okay. Because I have thoroughly consulted God on the matter, prayerfully searched the scriptures, sought godly counsel about it, and I am convinced that this was God saying no.

And so we move along. Now, Jeremiah gives us some more insights on this. So let's go a little further here.

Let's go to chapter 15 and look at verse 6. As we move along, there's a progression. And God operates line upon line, precept upon precept, the scripture says, which means that he builds one truth on another. And he gives us what's called progressive revelation so that we see more about him and we know more clearly as he shows us one thing after another.

So in Jeremiah chapter 15 and in verse 6, he adds a little bit to this. He says, now here's how the problem is. He says, you have forsaken me, says the Lord, and you are gone backward.

Therefore, I stretch out my hand against you and destroy you because I am weary with repenting. Now, in the earlier one, we saw that he said that we had forgotten him. Now he says we've forsaken him.

So forsaken, that sounds pretty strong. Now, God, are you sure? I don't really see myself as forsaking you. But sometimes we're doing something like that and we don't realize that we're forsaking the Lord.

But to forsake him means to neglect him, means to ignore him. You know, sometimes with your spouse, you'll maybe come in, maybe the guys will come in from work and the wife doesn't greet them with a hello or a hi or a kiss, you know, or maybe the guy doesn't greet the wife, you know, or whatever it might be. And the other one feels a little bit ignored, forsaken, you know.

But you think about God here. He's saying, now wait a minute, you're just going on about your merry way and you never bother to call upon me unless you get in trouble. See, it's only when, have you ever noticed, I have some friends and as soon as the phone rings and they pick it up, they say, yeah, what do you want? It's like, nobody calls me unless they want something, right? It does sort of seem to work that way.

Sometimes we just want to visit with somebody or talk to them. But oftentimes the phone call is motivated by the fact that that person has something we need or want. Okay, so we want to call them because we want, there's a reason for that.

We want to get something from them. We want them to do something for us. And God is saying, now wait a minute.

What about a friendship relationship here? But you've forsaken me in that sense in that you don't really just talk to me for the sake of talking like, wow, Lord, I love the way the few snowflakes are coming down today. Or how interesting the way that piece of grass is growing out there just right in the middle of the others or those flowers or whatever. Just any little conversation of talking to the Lord just to make conversation with him, to value him.

I was watching something the other day about the human body and the way, the different parts of the body and then I was doing some reading on it later and I'm going like, this is amazing. I mean, just the sheer brilliance of God. I mean, the amazing genius of God in the design of creation that, like in the kidneys, for instance, I was doing some research on that recently and I always thought of the kidneys just kind of like a big sponge and it filters stuff out and whatever, sort of like the liver does.

But no, it also, it goes through and decides, well, you've got too much of this and not enough of that and it processes everything and then it gives your body just exactly what it needs, minerals and such. And so I'm thinking, wow. Now, how amazing that is that God took all that into account, all these different details so the human body could function together perfectly.

And of course, we hear about that in every area of life. That's just the most recent thing. So I'm telling God, God, this is amazing how wonderful you are.

You have done such a great thing here in just this one thing, just the kidney alone and in every other part of the body included. But we just talk to him about stuff, you know, and then we have something like some days I'll say, wow, Lord, I don't get it. I don't understand what's going on here or that doesn't make sense

to me.

Help me, explain to me how this works, you know. Ask him a question and just talk to him about stuff. So that's what he's referring to here is that he's saying basically, well, in a sense it's as you have forsaken me.

You're caught up in other things and you're contained in other things and I don't mean as much to you. Have you ever, as you go through a marriage sometimes, I counsel people and it's like the husband or the wife, they say like, I feel slighted. It's like I used to be really important in my husband's life, the woman will say, and now he's got his friends, he's got his football and he goes hunting and he's always got something else, a place to go, somebody else and I don't seem to matter to him anymore.

And so, and God is saying, yeah, you know, I feel that way. It's like when you first started out, when you first got saved, when you were really in a crisis, you called upon me, I came through for you and now everything's going good and where am I in the picture? It's like you don't even think about me or talk to me anymore. And so it does get back, it's like the only time you talk to me is when you got a problem, you know, when things get bad.

Now he doesn't mind helping us when those things happen, but he's just saying, hey, wait a minute, I'm here all the time. We should have a relationship that's ongoing, a continuous kind of a thing. So that's what he's asking for here and he's helping us to see that if we're not careful, we will forget him and then we will end up forsaking him.

We'll, as it were, as he says, hey, you've gone backward. We'll turn our back on him. You know, have you ever had in a situation, I counsel couples or maybe parent-child relationships and the kid gets upset with the parent and they turn their back on the mom or the dad or the husband turns his back on his wife or vice versa.

That's a very hurtful thing. It's like saying, I reject you. It's like saying, I don't want you anymore.

I don't need you anymore. And God's saying, you know, I have feelings too. He says, I have feelings too.

God is a God of emotion. And he's saying, I feel this. In fact, there's a passage we skipped it earlier.

He says, don't you understand when these things happen, I cry. As it were, he's saying, it breaks my heart. It breaks my heart.

And Jesus, of course, we know he wept because his heart was broken for the people he came to give his life for. So that's what he wants us to understand here. But then he says this.

He says, I stretch out my hand against you to destroy you. Now, we immediately start to think, oh, God is mad at us. He hates us.

No, God is saying, now, wait a minute. I tried to tell you, you can't change yourself. But you're going on headstrong.

And he says, don't you understand, I'm weary with all this repenting. You keep saying you're sorry. You keep making all these promises to me.

He says, you honor me with your lips, but your heart is far from me. That is, don't you understand, it's got to be a heart relationship. It's not enough to just offer a few offerings.

It's not enough to make a few promises. It's not enough just to say you're sorry. It's not enough to confess a sin.

He says, don't you see, there's got to be a corresponding change in your life. And don't you realize, I'm the source of that change. But you keep trying to do it your way.

And you're going the wrong way, and you're still getting the wrong results. He says, I am weary of all this. And so, my hand is set to destroy you.

And we think, wow, that sounds pretty harsh. Well, it is harsh. I mean, drastic problems require drastic measures.

They sure do. And God's saying, it's time for drastic measures. Drastic measures have to happen.

So, if we look just another chapter over, in chapter 17 and verse 5, So, thus says the Lord. Now, he's building up, see. He's slowly building them up to understand something about what has to happen in their life.

So, in verse 5 there, he says, Cursed is the man that would trust in man, or make flesh his arm, whose heart departs from the Lord. So, I say, now here it is. Not only did you forget me and forsake me, but it's because your heart has departed from me.

You don't have the proper heart relationship with me. It's a heart issue. He says, it's a heart issue.

He says, and so there he's saying, look. Not only did you trust, as he told us earlier. He was talking about how we were trusting the wrong thing.

But he's saying here, because you're trusting in man. That is, you're trusting in yourself. He says, in the final analysis, your main thing is look out for old number one.

That is, me, myself, and I. And you're relying upon yourself to solve your problems and meet your needs. And it's all very self-centered and very self-serving. Remember, it goes back to that word pride we talked about.

So, he says, but that person is going to be cursed. Why? Because the flesh is under the curse. The flesh cannot produce life.

And, in fact, God said it's cursed. It will never produce life. But, oh, how we want Ishmael to live before God.

See, Abraham had a son. He had a son named Ishmael. Now, how did Ishmael come about? God had promised that he would have a son in old age.

And Abraham and his wife conspired. And they manipulated the system. And by the way of the flesh, they forced it to happen.

And so, they had a child. But it wasn't the child of promise. It wasn't the child that came by the way of the Spirit of God doing a miracle.

No. It was by their manipulation and coercion. And because they worked it out and forced it to happen.

But that's not God's way. And so, God says, Ishmael will not be blessed. I have one that is the child of promise.

And Isaac is that child. And that's the one God brought for the purpose of showing us when God does something, he does it right. When God makes it, it's the best that it can be.

And you can't improve on God. And God's way was Isaac. The way of the Spirit.

The way of promise. But the way of the flesh is under the curse. So, you see, now, you have been trusting in yourself.

And you have made flesh your humanity, your strength. Your arm is a symbol of our strength. And so, you said you made flesh your arm.

And that results in death, not life. So, the curse means that you experience death, not life. And yet, we're longing to see God work in our life.

To see God meet the needs of our life. To see God provide for us and take care of us. And yet, when it doesn't happen, we say, Why isn't it happening? He's saying because you're bent.

Because you've taken the wrong path. You took the wrong turn. And so, because of this distortion and this corruption, you're experiencing death, not life.

In other words, sin is occurring in your life. Or you're experiencing a void in terms of God's presence and power and provision in your life. But you say it's the heart is departed from God.

There is not, at the heart level, a connection. And even after we ask Christ into our heart and He comes to live in our life, if we don't live from that heart relationship in union with Him, then we're not living in that vital connection with the source of life. We're disjointed.

Joseph was in an accident. His shoulder and everything was all disjointed. And he can't hardly even use his arm.

In fact, there's times he can't even use his hand. Because it's disjointed. When you're disjointed, you're dysfunctional.

See, his being disjointed in his shoulder meant he's dysfunctional. He can't do what he used to do the way he used to do it. He said he couldn't even pick up the dishcloth.

And his hand had no strength. He couldn't even use it. He just put his hand up like this.

Just left it there. Didn't work. And that's what happens to us.

When we're not living out of that vital union in Christ, then we're not connected to the source properly. And in that disjointed fashion, we are dysfunctional. Which means we don't function correctly.

So he's saying, this is where the problem is. So let's go. What he's going to do to solve it.

In chapter 18, in verse 3. We'll start with verse 3. And what's happening here is God says, okay, I'm going to give you a visual aid. He said, I'm going to help you visualize what's going on. So he said, Jeremiah, I want you to go down to the potter's house.

And you know a potter is one that makes pottery. So he said, I want you to go down there. And he makes it out of clay.

So he takes this special kind of dirt. And he mixes it with water. And he got it all mixed up good there.

And he made it. And he began to make this vessel. So verse 3. He says, then I went down to the potter's house.

And behold, he wrought a work on the wheel. On the potter's wheel. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter.

So he made it again, another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? Says the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.

As the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you and I in the Lord's hand. Now what's he just shown us here? Well, as pertains to what we're looking at today, change or exchange. So he's saying, now look, I've shown you a pattern here in the lives of the people of Israel.

And how they made their attempts to serve God. And how they would constantly turn away. Why? Because they were bent.

Because they were marred. Because they were damaged. So he says, now let's go to the potter's house.

Here's this clay. The clay is made, but the clay is flawed. The clay is marred.

There's still something not right with this particular vessel that comes out of the potter. And so God said, yeah, I made you in Adam. God created Adam.

And so he created this race of people. But he knew that there was something lacking. Something missing.

Because we still did not contain within us the life source. We had not the tree of life. Oh, yeah.

The tree of knowledge. We had plenty of that. But we did not have the tree of life.

And so God is saying to us here in this picture, now look. This particular vessel was marred. It was flawed.

Something was missing. And it wasn't right. Now, and our thinking is, okay, then let's just find something to patch it up and fix it up.

Now, Mike Poole here used to do body shop work. And, of course, Dennis is still involved in that. And so these guys, they specialize in taking things that are damaged and broken.

And what do they do? They fix them up again. They repair them. They replace a part here.

And they fix a dent there. And they repaint it. And it all looks really nice.

Except they know that underneath there is still a damaged old car. See, it just looks good. It's all about appearance.

And, you know, we're in a dangerous slippery slope because we seem to be more concerned about how things look than how things are. And as long as it looks good on the outside, we think that's good enough.

But God is not into patching us up.

He's not into just a piecemeal sort of a process. He wants to restore us and make us whole. And He knows the only way for that to happen is that, first of all, He has to, and remember He said, I will destroy you.

We have to be destroyed. So the potter took that clay with the vessel that was marred. And what did he do? He had to destroy it.

Why? Because he hated it? No. Because he wanted it right. He wanted it the best.

Now there is in all of us this desire for perfection. Some of us are more perfectionistic than others. But we have this desire to make something and make it really right.

And so Lou, she works around on her Christmas decorations and it's not quite right. And then we've got to go get this thing and we've got to change that. And she rearranges stuff.

Because she wants it just right. And she has in her mind what looks right to her. And she keeps on it until she gets it just right.

Now I had to send a picture off to a church that wants to use a picture in their promo. And I didn't have a good picture. It wasn't the right size.

Actually I liked the way it looked a lot better than what I came up with. But she and I had to take pictures. And we must have taken 50 pictures of me.

I said we're going to take a lot until we get it just right. But you know it never did get just right. Because I've decided I just don't look just right anymore.

So then you're going to have to make do with what you've got now. This is what you see. This is what you get from me.

So that's how it is. But I'm saying we all want it to look right. And God is the ultimate perfectionist.

And He wants us right. And He knows what right looks like. Because He is right.

And He says now look I made you in my image that you might express my likeness. But your image was marred because of sin. Because Adam fell.

And as Adam fell a race of sinful people came forth. And God says that's not good enough. Now I've given you some instructions and some guidance.

And sometimes you do it. And some of you get closer than others. And some of you do better than others.

But close is not close enough. It's never going to be right until we do away with the old and replace it with the new. And you and I are still trying to patch up and prop up this old ishmael of the flesh.

Instead of letting God do what He alone can do. By living out that new nature in Christ. So this is what He's telling us here.

He says now look I have a new vessel. I'm going to make it again another vessel. As it seemed good to the potter to make.

Now He says now that's what I'm talking about. Because see when God makes His creation as He did there in the Garden of Eden. As He went through the creation process there.

Every time He made something He said and it was in God's eyes He said good. And then when it came to man He said and he's very good. Of course that was before man's sin.

And so now God makes us a new creation. A new creation. So in Psalm 102 verse 26 He says now as a vesture I will change you and you will be changed.

It's like we was trying on clothes yesterday at the house. Well how does this look? How does this necklace look? And so she's trying and then she'd change this and she'd change. And when you change something you take the one thing off and you put the other one on.

And God says now when you change your clothes you take it off the old one and you put the new one on. He says now that's the kind of change I'm talking about. He says I'm going to take the old life off of you and I'm going to put a new life on you.

Not just on the outside but from the inside out I'm going to change you. That's why He goes to this matter of the heart. And so we're going to go to a verse we know quite well.

2 Corinthians 5 verse 17. And He says there in 2 Corinthians 5 verse 17 He says behold if any man be in Christ he is a new creation. So what is God saying? He says I'm going to make you a new creation.

Just like that potter made a new vessel I'm making you a new creation. And He says all things are going to pass away. I'm destroying the old and I'm going to replace it with the new.

Now Jesus said that in Luke chapter 9 verse 24. Jesus said you've got to lose your life in order to find it. You've got to let your old life go.

Stop trying to fix it up and patch it up and improve on God. And just accept it that your humanity can never be good enough so you can never change your life. So accept.

Okay Lord I see that what really happened was you changed me when I asked you to come into my life. You changed me on the inside. And I'm going to exchange my old life for this new life I have now in Christ.

So I've got to accept this by way of an exchange. God's way of exchange is He replaces the old with the new. So that's what we want to get back to.

Now wait a minute Lord. So I've already been changed. Here I'm trying to change something that you've already made the necessary change.

When you changed my heart and gave me a new life, a new nature in Christ. I'm a new creation now. So I need to start living out of that vital union in Christ from within.

From the divine connection on the inside I can draw your life and now you can work through me. Well I couldn't make the right changes because of my efforts and actions. You can make the necessary changes.

Because He is the change maker. He changes on the inside and then He perfects that which concerns us by changing that which needs to take place on the outside. So our privilege is to say, now wait a minute Lord.

You've changed me so I refuse to try to change anymore. I can't change. But you've already changed me by giving me a new life.

You removed that old life. You took out that old evil heart and you replaced it with a new divine heart. And that's what He promised to do in Jeremiah.

And this is our closing summary verse here. He says in Jeremiah 36 in verse 27. I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and you shall keep my judgments and do them.

So He's saying I'm going to change you. Verse 26 said a new heart will I give you. A new spirit will I put within you.

I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh. I will give you a living heart. A heart of flesh.

So He's saying I'm going to take away the old. I'm going to destroy the old that was not good. The old vessel it's got to go.

But I'm going to replace it with something better. I'm going to replace it with my life. My spirit He says is what I'm going to put in you.

I'm going to put a new heart in you and it's my spirit. And now He says my spirit will cause you to want what I want. And it will enable you to do what I want you to do.

See in other words my spirit will produce the needed changes in your life. I will change your heart. Now the core has been changed.

And now I will change your life because my life in you. My spirit working through you will produce the needed changes in the everyday details of your life. And we all see needs of change in different ways that we say things or do things.

But let's go back to the source of change. Lord you live in me. You changed my heart.

If you can do that then you can change these attitudes in me. You can change my actions. So I trust you now to do that.

I confess that of sin and I trust you to make that change in me. I don't want that. I want you.

So I trust you now to do what you know is right and best in me. So we don't have to make any more promises to get better or do more. We just have to say Lord I trust you now.

As you changed my heart so change my life. And he will. And he will.

Because he loves us. And he wants the best for us.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/lewis-gregory/change-or-exchange/>

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