

How Do We Change?

by Guy Moore

“For we through the Spirit by faith are waiting for the hope of righteousness, for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.” (Gal. 5:5-6 NAS).

“For as for us, through the agency of the Spirit on the ground of faith a hope for righteousness we are eagerly awaiting, for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision is of any power nor uncircumcision, but faith coming to effective expression through love.”
(Gal. 5:5-6 Wuest)

When it comes to change I don't believe in simplistic formulas, but having said that this passage comes as close to a formula for change as I've come across.

In context, Paul is contrasting the two ways we approach God:

1. We try to keep the Law and find favor with God through the act of circumcision which requires obeying the whole Law perfectly - Paul explains that this is antithetical to grace.
2. Paul is showing us how our lives are to be lived out in grace under the new covenant.

NOTICE!:

1. He says “For we through the Spirit.” Paul wants us to remember that the Holy Spirit is the Agent of Change. It is not a method, but a Person Who changes us. There is a caveat however. In John 3:8 Christ tells Nicodemus that the Spirit is like the wind - He blows where He wills. We can't demand change, especially on our own timetable, but we can trust the Change Agent!

2. Notice Paul states “for we through the Spirit, by faith, etc.” Here he is talking about sanctifying faith, that is trusting the Holy Spirit to empower us, relying upon Him, believing that He will equip us with whatever we need to fulfil our unique calling.

3. He then says we are “waiting for the hope of righteousness.” Literally in the

Greek, we are to patiently and expectantly wait on God and trust in His Spirit to make us more and more conform to the image of Christ's righteousness. Hope isn't wishful thinking, but an assurance, a faith turned towards the future, that we will be conformed.

Now because of Christ's atoning work on the cross, we have not only been declared “not guilty,” but God has also given to us or imputed to us the righteousness of Christ-this is justification and this is our position or standing before God. However, the process of becoming righteous in our thoughts attitudes and behaviors is a life-long process-this is the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit that won't be fully realized until we die or He returns.

4. V.6 “*For in Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.*” Paul remind us that as believers we are in Christ and that what really matters is not simply external conformity to religious behaviors which have no power to change us, but that we have an internal ongoing faith in and reliance upon God's Spirit to work (lit. energize) in us a genuine love for others. And it's in loving others that we get a taste of what it means to see the hope of righteousness being fulfilled.

Living by grace under the New Covenant leaves no room for pride because we realize that the Spirit of God is the One Who enables us to change and empowers us to love supernaturally so that He receives the glory.

Indwelling Spirit + faith + waiting + love =
Hope of Righteousness