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Changed Desire from the Inside Out
Part 3 of “Change from the Inside Out”

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Our context: The Lord’s transforming work in us

The last two weeks: *Changed purpose + changed thinking* = **repentance** that transforms our perspective, especially of our **past**

The next two weeks: *Changed attitude and changed hope* = **faith** that transforms our prospects of the **future**

All our present decisions are influenced by how we assess our past and aspire toward our future. History + Hope = Holiness

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TODAY: Changed Desire: Transformation of our deepest affections = **new passions** for Christ and his mission today

Soren Kierkegaard, “Purity of heart is to will one thing.”

Jonathan Edwards, “True religion lies in the affections.”

There are two mistakes we can make as we learn about changed desire. One is complete passivity, where dependence on God involves no effort on our part. The other mistake is total reliance on human effort, with God as more of a cosmic cheerleader than the One that transforms us from the inside out.

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Key Scriptures

Psalm 27:4, 8: One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I *seek*: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to *seek* him in his temple...My heart says of you, "Seek his face!" Your face, LORD, I will *seek*.

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Psalm 84: 1-2, 4-5, 10: How lovely is your dwelling place, LORD Almighty! My soul *yearns*, even *faints*, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh *cry out* for the living God...Blessed are those who dwell in your house, they are ever praising you. Blessed are those whose *strength* is in you, whose *hearts are set* on pilgrimage...Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord than dwell in the tents of the wicked."

Please notice the hunger and thirst for God...we are aiming for spiritual tastes that are holy and mature, senses that are wakened to God:

- Taste and see that the Lord is good
- Hear O Israel...
- With unveiled faces we behold...
- That which we have seen, and touched...you are the Potter, we are the clay..."if I can just touch the hem of his robe..."
- "An aroma pleasing to the Lord..."

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Colossians 3:1-2, 12-14: Since, then, you have been *raised with Christ*, set your *hearts* on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your *minds* on things above, not on earthly things...Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, *clothe yourselves* with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another...forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues, put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

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Changed desire: God's process of transformation

Step One: Awareness of God's extravagant love for us!

Love created the cosmos – and us. Love compelled our Lord to a Cross and empowers his intercession for us. Love propels our mission of reconciliation. It all begins and ends with God's love!

I John 3:16; 4:10, 19: "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us...This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins...We love, because he first loved us."

This deep, powerful and unconditional love is no less than the overflow of the divine dance of the Holy Trinity! God's own eternal being is an ever-giving interplay of affection and action as Father, Son and Holy Spirit abide in perfect harmony.

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Step Two: Awakening to our need = repentance arising from changed purpose and changed thinking

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, "The line between good and evil runs down the center of the human heart."

Ephesians 4:1: "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received."

World religions all command followers to great discipline and sacrifice in order to achieve paradise, nirvana, fulfillment or some other version of bliss. Our Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and David; the God of the Prophets, and the One Incarnate for our salvation in Jesus of Nazareth; the one crucified for our sins and raised up for our deliverance...this God declares that all who believe are now called children, brothers, saints...Royalty! And then we learn to live like it...

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Step Three: Allowing the Holy Spirit “all the way in” to the inner depths of our hearts

Thomas A'Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*: “Jesus has today many who love his heavenly kingdom, but few who carry his cross...Plenty of people he finds to share the banquet, few to share the fast. Everyone desires to share in his rejoicing, but few are willing to suffer for his sake...”

Psalm 139:23-24: “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Deep cleaning a house or car is not fun...oh the things we discover! Come with me as I was working for a restaurant – a good one...and had the joy of deep cleaning the stove, hood, and grease traps! A thorough dental or medical exam...not fun, but many of us are glad as things are confronted before they get worse. Even exercise discipline emphasizes the deep core muscles...will we let the Spirit be a gentle surgeon of our soul?

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Step Four: Affirming our new identity in Christ – personally and in the church family

God is not merely repairing an old model – he is fashioning something beautiful and extraordinary!

2 Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come; the old has gone, the new is here!”

This is almost a repeat of a previous point – but here I am emphasizing that the Lord is doing more than commanding outward conformity – God lives in us! In books or movies we hear about Witness Protection where people receive new identities, locations and start a fresh life. Jesus does even more than issue new papers, perform plastic surgery and relocate our geography...the Lord transforms our entire being in

light of an eternal destiny and purpose that outshines any success we might measure!

Peter King: "You are a child of the King"

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Step Five: Aspiring for character transformation and mission impact

Jack Deere, "A passion for Jesus chases away a thousand sins."

I Thessalonians 1:3: "We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."

Fear can keep us from serious sin for a season; however, God's love helps us hate what destroys others and us. Gradually we find the world of rebellion and selfishness less appealing. "The patient acquisition of virtue" takes time and we will not pass every test. As we rely on God's grace and care more about pleasing the Lord than impressing the world, and as we aim for integrity over impression, we will discover profound contentment.

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Step Six: Acting on the truth, regardless of feelings, will actually transform our deepest passions!

Our feelings change by the hour; obedience is 24/7 – for the glory of God, the good of others...and our flourishing!

Psalm 119:14: "I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches."

We have focused on our desires, affections, feelings...paradoxically, learning new habits – and doing the right things even when it is hard... actually rewires the brain and body, affects of heart and is one part of

our desires changing for the good!

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Changed desire: A daily response to love...and learning to rest

St. Augustine: "O Lord, You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you."

Psalm 62:5: "Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him."

The foundation and the fruit of transformation: Ceasing from our own efforts and finding true rest in the grace and love of God!

Sabbath is built into the fabric of creation and daily rest is needed for health and sanity. Good sleep matters. But this rest is more profound than the mattress we recline on at night. Will we finally rest

- From our own efforts at salvation?
- From competing with others' success?
- From focusing on image over integrity?

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Matthew 11:28-30 from *The Message*: "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me - watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn how to live freely and lightly."

New desires emerge as we starve the old nature and feed the new one. As we end our efforts and receive the work of Christ, we find new love in our hearts, new motives for our actions and fresh perspective on life. May the Lord grant us the desires of a transformed heart!

