

INTRODUCTION

This morning, I’m happy to be resuming my verse by verse study of the wonderful book of 2 Corinthians. This series is entitled, “Hope for Cracked Pots.” Today we’re going to be talking about “Extreme Makeover: An Inside Job.”

I like the joke about a lady named Jane who was taken to the hospital for an operation. She was scared of dying, so she said, “Lord, is this it? Am I going to die?” The Lord said, “No, Jane, according to my records you’re going to live for another 43 years and 12 days.” Jane said, “Thank you, Lord!”

Realizing she had so much time to live, Jane decided to make the most of it. While she was in the hospital she decided to undergo a full makeover. She had liposuction, tummy tuck, a nose job, and a face lift—she even dyed her hair a new color. On the day she left the hospital, she was struck by a bus while crossing the street and killed. As you can imagine, Jane was pretty upset when she stood before the Lord. She said, “Lord! You said I had another 40 years! What happened?” The Lord said, “Jane? Is that you? I didn’t recognize you!”

I borrowed the title of this message from ABC’s “Extreme Makeover” show. If you’ve never seen it, this is a show where people who are unhappy with their appearance apply to the producers to undergo free plastic surgery and cosmetic dentistry to change their appearance. They also receive coaching in physical fitness, hairstyle, make-up, and clothing. During the process they are kept isolated from their family and friends, and each episode ends with the made-over person walking out so his or her family can witness the transformation. It’s pretty amazing what medical science can do to change outward appearance. And sometimes when you look better on the outside, you feel better on the inside. But an external change in appearance is no guarantee that you’ll experience any kind of internal change.

So I want to talk to you about “Extreme Makeover: An Inside Job.” God has been involved in giving extreme makeovers for centuries! But these are makeovers on the inside. God is more interested in changing you from the inside than on the outside. The prophet Samuel once made this profound observation about God, “Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7)

Internal makeovers are a lot better than external makeovers, because they are permanent. A face lift will eventually fall. A tummy tuck will eventually un-tuck. A wrinkle remover will only delay the inevitable—but when God transforms someone on the inside, it lasts for eternity. These words were written by a man who was ambushed from above one day on the road to Damascus. On that day, the Great Physician performed an internal extreme makeover on his life, and he was never the same again.

2 Corinthians 5:14-17. “For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the

old has gone, the new has come!”

During this message, it’s important to remember these truths apply only to people to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The most important word in verse 17 is the word “IF.” If you are in Christ, you can claim these benefits of your extreme makeover. These four truths are evidence of God’s extreme makeover in our lives. This is the inside story.

1. I HAVE A NEW PURPOSE FOR LIVING!

The Bible says in verse 15, “And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”

If I asked you, “What is your purpose for living?” How would you answer that? Many people just get up every morning to go to a job they don’t like to make money they can’t save to buy things they can’t afford to impress people they don’t even like. Do you have an eternal purpose, or are you just playing the game of life?

Once a lady was walking through a zoo when she looked into the chimpanzee enclosure. She was surprised to see three of the chimps gathered in a corner tossing dice. She went to find a zoo employee and said, “Somebody threw some dice in with the chimps.” The zoo worker didn’t believe her, so she said, “Come and look.” They walked back and, sure enough, the three chimps were tossing dice and jumping up and down. The lady said, “Aren’t you going to take the dice away?” The zoo worker said, “Nah, they’re just playing for peanuts.”

Is that basically what you’re doing? Playing for peanuts? Jesus has come into your life to give you a purpose for living—so that you will no longer live for yourself, but to live for Him, who died for you.

One of the first English novels was *Robinson Crusoe* written by Daniel Defoe in 1719. The actual title was: *The Life and most Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner: who lived Eight and Twenty Years, all alone in an uninhabited Island on the coast of America, lying near the Mouth of the Great River of Oroonoke; Having been cast on Shore by Shipwreck, wherein all the Men perished but himself. With An Account how he was at last as strangely deliver’d by Pyrates. Written by Himself.* In the story, Robinson Crusoe rescued a native from death by cannibals. He named the native Friday. Crusoe taught Friday how to speak English and even led him to Christ. Out of gratitude for saving his life, Friday became Crusoe’s lifelong servant and companion. Friday never left him. Every time Crusoe saw him he could say, “Thank God, it’s Friday.”

We should all be like Friday. We were lost and dying, and Jesus rescued us from eternal death. Because of His great love for us, we should be willing to live our lives for Him.

2. I HAVE A NEW ATTITUDE TOWARD OTHERS!

The Bible says in verse 16, “From now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.” When you become a

Christian, you start looking at the people differently. For instance, you no longer look at people from a worldly point of view. The world tends to lump people into all kinds of categories: rich/poor/smart/dumb/pretty/ugly/winners and loser. The world has its lists—if you aren't on the "A List" then you're not one of the pretty people. God only has two lists—those who have been redeemed and those who have not yet been redeemed. Our job is to participate in his plan of moving people from the unredeemed list to the redeemed list! Now some people who call themselves Christians say that those two lists are already established and there's nothing we can do about moving someone from one list to the other. It's a complicated issue, and I don't understand it all, there is one thing I know for sure. "He died for all." (verse 15). I'm not smart enough who know who the "chosen" are, so I'm committed to sharing the gospel with everyone! When you look at people from heaven's perspective instead of the worldly standpoint you see every man, woman, boy, and girl as someone for whom Jesus died. In 1985 Phil McHugh wrote a song "In Heaven's Eyes" which was recorded by Sandy Patty. The chorus says, "In Heaven's eyes, there are no losers. In Heaven's eyes, no hopeless cause. Only people like you, with feelings like me, Amazed by the grace we can find in Heaven's eyes."

3. I HAVE A NEW IDENTITY IN CHRIST!

Verse 17 says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation." Those two words "in Christ" are two of the most important words in all of the Bible. That term, or its equivalent, appears 172 times in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul used it 97 times in his letters. You may wonder, which one is it, "Christ in me?" or "me in Christ?" Yes. This is a glorious twin truth in God's Word. Major Ian Thomas wrote: "To be in Christ that is redemption; but for Christ to be in you that is sanctification! To be in Christ that makes you fit for heaven; but for Christ to be in you that makes you fit for earth! To be in Christ that changes your destination; but for Christ to be in you that changes your destiny! The one makes heaven your home the other makes this world His workshop." (*The Saving Life of Christ* pg. 19)

If you're still a little confused, let me demonstrate this truth visually with an empty Coke bottle and a bowl of water. The bottle represents a person without Christ—empty. You may recall from John 4 that Jesus performed an extreme makeover (inside job) on a woman He met at the well. She desperately needed a makeover because she was a despised half-breed Samaritan, she had gone through five husbands, and was living with a man who wasn't her husband. She was a social outcast who had to visit the well alone to avoid the sneers and ridicule of the other women. But Jesus promised He could give her Living Water so she would never thirst again. He makes the same promise to us today. So, let's allow this water to represent Jesus Christ the living water.

As I plunge the bottle into the water, notice what happens. The bottle is filled with water. So let me ask you: Is the bottle in the water, or is the water in the bottle? Both. In the same way, I am in Christ and Christ is in me.

Now, based upon this truth, I want to ask you an important question, "Just WHO do you think you are?" I'm not being sarcastic. Who are you, really? How do you see yourself? What is your identity? Are you still basing your identity on who you used to be or an old relationship?

There are many roles and relationships in our lives we use to determine our identity and even our self-worth. But if you are using any role or relationship other than seeing yourself primarily as a person who is "in Christ" then you are setting yourself up of disappointment and failure. Your identity "in Christ" is the only relationship that will carry you through this world into the next one.

For instance, you may be someone whose self-worth and identity was determined through a relationship with a husband or wife, and that's a noble relationship. But what happens when your spouse dies, or they divorce you? Your identity and self-worth suffers. That will never happen if your identity is rooted "in Christ."

What if you derive your main identity and self-worth from your job, what happens when you retire, or lose your job? Or we've all known couples whose self-worth and identity was firmly attached to being parents of their children—and that's a wonderful role, but what happens if a child dies, or when they move off and start their own families? That's why some couples who poured all their lives into raising their children one day look at each other and ask, "Who are you?" You may derive a sense of identity and self-worth because you're a great tennis player or golfer—a sudden injury could threaten that identity in a second. So if you allow your primary identity to be: "I am person in Christ," then you'll never be disappointed and all those other roles and relationships will even be enriched!

Identity theft is a real problem today, but it's nothing new. Satan who steals, kills, and destroys, has been trying to steal away your identity as a person in Christ for a long time. Satan is the accuser of Christians. To a Christian Satan says, "You're a rotten sinner, because sometimes you sin." God says, "You're a forgiven saint who occasionally sins." Satan says, "You get your identity from what you've done." God says, "No, you get your identity from what I've done for you!" Satan says, "You are who others say you are." God says, "You are who I say you are!"

At Celebrate Recovery when we get up to speak we say, "Hi, my name is David and I'm a follower of Jesus Christ in recovery from..." In other words, CR correctly teaches people that you shouldn't be defined by your hurts, habits, and hang-ups. Your primary identity should come from your relationship with Christ. When you are in Christ it affects every area of your life.

The more you learn about who you really are "in Christ." The more secure and confident you'll be in your walk with Christ. I said the New Testament refers to us being "in Christ" 172 times, here are just a few of the benefits about your true identity in Christ: We receive grace in Christ (1 Corinthians 1:4); our redemption is in Christ (Romans 3:24); we are justified in Christ (Galatians 2:17); we have forgiveness of sins in Christ (Ephesians 4:32); there is no condemnation in Christ (Romans 8:1); we are a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17); we have eternal life in Christ (Romans 6:23); God supplies all our needs in Christ (Philippians 4:19); we have every spiritual blessing of heaven in Christ (Ephesians 1:3); we will be presented to God perfect in Christ. (Colossians 1:28); we cannot be separated from the love of God in Christ (Romans 8:35).

When you realize that your life is securely in Christ, you don't have to worry about losing your salvation. Noah's ark was a type and a prophecy of Christ. Noah and his family and all the

animals were safe from the flood of judgement, because they were safe "in the ark." In the same way, when you are "in Christ" you are safe from the eternal flood of God's judgment against sin. And you can't lose your position in Christ. Noah might have fallen down in the ark, but he never fell OUT of the ark! As you live and walk in Christ, you may stumble and fall, but you can't fall out of Christ!

4. I HAVE A NEW NATURE THAT CHANGES ME!

In verse 17 the Bible promises "The *old* has gone, the *new* has come!" What is the "old" that has gone and the "new" that has come? The answer can be found in Ephesians 4:22-24, "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self [that's your old sinful nature], which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self [your new Christ-like nature], created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." (Ephesians 4:22 -24)

There's a Broadway Musical entitled, "I love you. You're Perfect. Now Change." The truth is, we can't change ourselves, but God can change us when we surrender to Him. Jesus comes into our heart at our new birth and infuses us with a new nature—His Divine nature. This is a miraculous transformation.

I said recently that becoming a Christian isn't like a tadpole becoming a frog; it's more like the frog who was kissed and became a prince. A woman was walking through a park when a frog hopped up and said, "I'm really a handsome prince and if you'll kiss me I'll turn into your prince and marry you." The woman thought about it and then picked the frog up and put it in her purse and kept walking. A bystander had seen what happened and said, "Why didn't you kiss that frog?" The lady said, "In today's world a talking frog is worth a lot more than a talking man."

What changes immediately is the direction of our lives. You were headed toward hell, and God turns you around. But what confuses a lot of Christians is that when they become a Christian they expect that they'll never sin again. So when they do, they wonder, "Am I really saved?" Jesus comes to give you a new nature, but the old sinful nature is still there—that's why you don't change overnight. When it says "the old is gone" it means that the control your old nature had over you is gone—the sin nature still is present, but it just no longer controls you.

Verse 17 says we become "a new creation." It's the same word used to describe the creation found in Genesis 1. Let me use the first creation (Genesis 1) to illustrate the new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) God didn't create the universe in one flash—God spent six days in this creative process. Now, were these literal 24 hour days? I doubt it, because according to Genesis 1, God didn't even create the Sun and moon until Day #4, so how are you going to measure 24 hours for the first three days? The first three days could have been billions of years as we measure time now. Only God knows. The Hebrew word for "day" in Genesis 1 is *yom* which can be translated "era" or "age." But the truth is God didn't need six days, or six million years, or even six nano-seconds. God is God. He could have done it in one billionth of a millisecond! But He chose to do it over a period of time—to teach us. He created for six days (or six *yom*) and then rested on the seventh. Why? Was God tired? Of course not. He was teaching us the loving lesson that we need to maintain a balance of work and rest.

But remember, we aren't primarily thinking about that first creation, we're talking about the new creation, what happened to you and me. Here's the truth: like at the first creation, God doesn't instantly delete our old sinful nature and replace it with our new nature. No, even after you become a Christian, you still have that old nature. God is gradually changing you to be more and more like Jesus. That's why we should never expect Christians to act perfect—because we aren't perfected yet!

New Christians often get frustrated when they don't understand that it's a process of gradual change. So when they stumble and sin they ask themselves, "Am I even a Christian at all?" Christians DO sin. The difference is when you were controlled by your old nature, you ran toward sin, but now you have a new nature you run from sin.

A.W. Tozer explains it this way: "Some would assume that when a professed Christian fails to show forth the moral beauty of Christ in his life it is a proof that he has been deceived and is actually not a real Christian at all. But the explanation is not so simple as that. The truth is that while Christ dwells in the believer's new nature, He has strong competition from the believer's old nature. The warfare between the old and the new goes on continually. Our old nature is not ripped out. Christ will change us and live out through us as we daily surrender our lives to His control." (*That Incredible Christian*, p. 77)

You have two natures struggling against each other. Paul described this struggle in Romans 6-7 when he said, "The things I want to do, I don't. And the things I don't want to do, I find myself doing them." Can you relate to that? Then he said, "It's not really me, it's SIN that remains in me." Like Paul, we still struggle every day with this old nature. Only as we surrender control of our lives on a daily basis to the control of Jesus can we experience a life of purity and goodness.

When I was in college I led Children's Church and I can still recall one of the kids' songs we sang. It said: "He's still workin' on me; to make me what I oughta be; It took Him just a week to make the moon and the stars; the sun and the moon and Jupiter and Mars; How loving and patient He must be; 'cause He's still working on me."

CONCLUSION

Have you ever driven by a restaurant and seen a sign that says, "Under New Management"? You know for sure things have changed inside that restaurant. Maybe you ate there under the old and the food was cold, and the service was slow, and you said, "Never again." But when you see the sign "Under New Management" you think, "I think I'll give it another try, because it's probably better than before." Every Christian should wear a sign around our neck that says, "Under New Management." What used to happen inside our lives has changed. I have a new purpose for living; a new attitude toward others; a new identity in Christ; and a new nature that's changing me. I've had an extreme makeover—on the inside.

Pistol Pete Maravich was one of the greatest basketball players in history. His college scoring record of 44 points per game may never be broken—and that was before there was a 3 point line! He was the NBA's first million dollar man. But he spent most of his life as a trouble unhappy

man who was a slave to a destructive lifestyle.

A few years ago when talk show host Larry King had heart surgery, he received this letter from Pete Maravich, who recently appeared on his program. The letter said, "Dear Larry, I'm so glad to hear that everything went well with your surgery. I want you to know that God is watching over you every minute, and even though I know you question that, I also know that one day it will be revealed to you. My prayer is that you remain open and God will touch your life as He has mine. Once I was a disbeliever. When I could not fill my life with basketball, I would simply substitute sex, liquid drugs, or material things to feed my internal, shell-like appearance. I was never satisfied. I have finally realized after 40 years that Jesus Christ is in me. My life is under new management. He will reveal His truth to you, Larry, because He lives." It was signed "Your friend, Pete Maravich." Larry King got the letter on a Monday, and on the next day, Pistol Pete died suddenly while playing a pick up game of basketball with James Dobson wearing a t-shirt that said, "Looking unto Jesus."

But Pistol Pete was ready to die. He had become a new creation and his life was under new management. If any person is in Christ he/she is a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come!" Hallelujah, that's what I call an extreme makeover—and inside job!

OUTLINE

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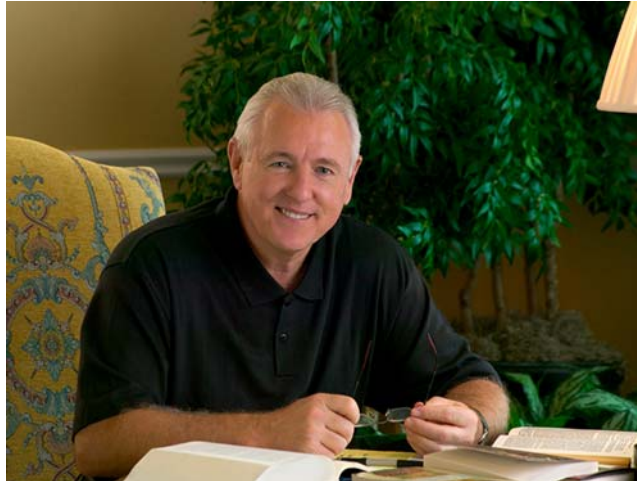
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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes