

Change Begins with Me

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. Psalm 64 - The Psalmist illustrates a common spirit among human beings; that is, the belief that if something is wrong, it must be someone else's fault.
1. However, he concludes that the righteous observe the Lord's wisdom as He executes His will and judgment, and relies on God to handle the disposition of the responsibility of others.

2. He addresses his own accountability, and leaves the accountability of others to them and God.

- B. If change is important to me, it must begin with me.

1. I must change myself to best facilitate the change around me.
2. I must then encourage others to become involved in a worthy change.
3. I must trust God Who will determine how much change will take place and who will help with it.

- C. We often develop the Little Red Hen persecution complex.

One day as the Little Red Hen was scratching in a field, she found a grain of wheat. "This wheat should be planted," she said. "Who will plant this grain of wheat?" "Not I," said the Duck. "Not I," said the Cat. "Not I," said the Dog.

"Then I will," said the Little Red Hen. And she did.

Soon the wheat grew to be tall and yellow. "The wheat is ripe," said the Little Red Hen. "Who will cut the wheat?"

"Not I," said the Duck. "Not I," said the Cat. "Not I," said the Dog.

"Then I will," said the Little Red Hen. And she did.

When the wheat was cut, the Little Red Hen said, "Who will thresh this wheat?" "Not I," said the Duck. "Not I," said the Cat. "Not I," said the Dog.

"Then I will," said the Little Red Hen. And she did.

When the wheat was all threshed, the Little Red Hen said, "Who'll take this wheat to the mill?"

"Not I," said the Duck. "Not I," said the Cat. "Not I," said the Dog.

"Then I will," said the Little Red Hen. And she did.

She took the wheat to the mill and had it ground into flour. Then she said, "Who will make this flour into bread?"

"Not I," said the Duck. "Not I," said the Cat. "Not I," said the Dog.

"Then I will," said the Little Red Hen. And she did.

She made and baked the bread. Then she said, "Who will eat this bread?"

"Oh! I will," said the Duck. "And I will," said the Cat. "And I will," said the Dog.

"No, no!" said the Little Red Hen. "I will do that." And she did.

1. If change is to occur, someone else is responsible to begin it. Or, if we begin it and others do not quickly come on board, we become discouraged and quit and blame others.

2. 2Tim. 4:16-17; Jer. 20:7-11

- D. Change is essential and inevitable.

1. Some people hate change of any kind. "If you want to make enemies, try to change something." (Woodrow Wilson)

2. Without change there is no growth and progress. "It may be hard for an egg to turn into a bird: It would be a jolly sight harder for it to learn to fly while remaining an egg." (C. S. Lewis)
3. Change around me does not begin until I begin to change. "One of the things I learned when I was negotiating was that until I changed myself I could not change others." (Nelson Mandela)
4. In the end, the only thing we may have the power to change is ourselves; can we learn to be content with that? "Incredible change happens in your life when you decide to take control of what you do have power over instead of craving control over what you don't." (Steve Maraboli)
5. Jerry Clower said that everybody wants things to change and get better; but, usually their ideas don't involve them doing anything different. But, they know what everybody else needs to do.

I. WHERE DOES CHANGE BEGIN?

- A. The Jews of Paul's day often complained about the immorality of the Gentiles.
 1. Rom. 2:1-3
 2. In condemning the Gentiles, they were condemning themselves.
 3. Their judgement of the Gentiles was accurate, but they did not see that the same judgement applied to their own lives.
 4. They were not wrong in condemning the sins of the Gentiles. Their sin was in not starting with themselves - Rom. 2:17-23
 - a. If stealing is wrong, then all thievery is wrong.
 - b. If adultery is wrong, then all adultery is wrong.
 - c. All have sinned - Rom. 3:23
- B. David knew what was wrong with the rich man in the story Nathan related
 1. 2Sam. 12:1-6 - David understood right and wrong when he condemned the abuse of the poor man.
 2. But he started with the other man before starting with himself.
- C. The Jews of Jesus' day built memorials to the prophets of old, showing their conviction that the prophets were righteous men revealing God's will.
 1. In this, they condemned their fathers as murderers of the righteous - Matt. 23:29-32
 2. Yet these people killed the prophet, John the Baptist. Soon they would kill the Son of God and persecute God's people.

II. WHO WILL BRING ABOUT THIS CHANGE?

- A. Not the ones who call on the Lord, but who are not obedient - Luke 6:46-49
- B. Not those who talk about change, but who do nothing - Matt. 21:28-31
- C. We are known by what we produce, not by what we talk about producing.
 1. Matt. 7:16-20
- D. If I recognize there is a problem, then responsibility for improvement falls on my shoulders first. To complain and do nothing contributes to the problem.
- E. We cannot change the things we've done; we can only change what we will do next.