

Change is Possible With God

In Jeremiah 13:23, the prophet says, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin Or the leopard his spots? {Then} you also can do good Who are accustomed to doing evil." In this verse, the prophet Jeremiah asked whether it was possible for people to stop sinning and do good. He uses in his illustration the Ethiopian and the leopard. Ethiopians were "descendants of Cush the grandson of Noah through his son Ham and a member of that nation". In keeping, the leopard was a "great spotted feline, which anciently infested the mountains of Syria". The prophet Jeremiah uses the Ethiopian and the leopard to explain the habit of sin. Just as an Ethiopian could not change the color of his skin nor the leopard remove his spotted coat, neither can a person change on his own from being a sinner. People habitually commit sin. Even if a person suffers "infliction of the extremist punishment", they still do not stop sinning.

This illustration and passage speaks of the impossibility to change the habit of committing sin. It indicates that change from sinning is impossible. Meaning, change in character or nature cannot be brought about by restriction or punishment of any kind. Scripture is replete with warnings to stop sinning against God. Even Christ first sermon called for repentance from sin and evil and a turning toward the kingdom of God. Nevertheless, even with extreme punishment, people still commit sin. No matter how many punishments, setbacks, heartaches, or loss a person incurs because of sins against God, people go on sinning. Sins such as drunkenness or sexual immorality continue because people do not have it within themselves to effect lasting change.

Even so, change is exactly what God commands in Scripture. In keeping, God has made a way for a person to change. It is through faith in Jesus Christ. Jay Adams, a noted Biblical counselor, states that God demands change. God demands change from a feeling-motivated lifestyle to commandment-motivated living. God effects this change by renewing the image ruined by the fall ([Eph. 4:17-24](#)). Once a person believes in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is given to renew the Believer. This renewal is in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness ([Col. 3:5-11](#)). God effects the change by enabling the Believer to put off the old man: The old man is the former manner of life that is habituated in a persons response patterns.

God wants Christians to put on the new-man, which is a new biblical manner of life with new habitual patterns to replace the old. God provides scriptural alternatives. Change is two-factored. It is not breaking habits alone, but also replacing them. Change is a focus on both putting off and putting on. An examples of put off and put on is found in [Eph. 4:25](#). The apostle Paul exhorts the Ephesians to *put off* lying and *put on* speaking the truth. Also, in [1 Pet. 3:9](#) Christians are exhorted to put off returning evil and put on returning good.

In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, it says, "While we were sinners". Meaning, before a person believes on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, they are sinners against God. Even so, the text goes on to say "such were". These Christians at Corinth used to be sinners (i.e., drunkards, sexual immoral) and you used to be God's enemy but now they were changed. This change occurred by the blood of Christ. The blood of Christ means the death of Christ on the cross. Because Jesus paid for their sins on the cross, through faith the Corinthian were changed.

The Corinthians did not change by doing good deeds. They did not become holy before until after believing on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. They were made saints because of their faith in Christ. Just the same, Christians today who used to be sinners are saints in Christ by faith. Anyone who believes in Jesus Christ death, burial, and resurrection from the dead for sin, used to belong to the world and Satan but now belong to God in Christ. So, can a person change who he is on the inside—a sinner? Can he be converted form a sinner to a saint? Yes, only through Christ Jesus. "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible (Matthew 19:24-26)."