

only to the degree that we are prepared to relinquish our own control over our lives and trust in God and the power of his Spirit, that the Spirit will be able to effectively work within us to bring about the change we seek. Because the two cannot coexist, as soon as our own power rises up within us, the Spirit of God retreats at that same moment and to the corresponding degree. We have to give up something of ourselves, to sacrifice something of our wills, in order to gain something much more valuable. Because the old life and the new life are incompatible, the Holy Spirit produces effects that are destructive for the old life and at the same time have an awakening power for the new. So as long as we allow the Holy Spirit to work within us he carries out the process of change we desire.

For change to be lasting, it must begin in the inner life - in the heart

But if any change is to be lasting it will have to begin in the *inner life*, in the heart. Whoever comes under the influence of the Spirit experiences an impetus to change *from within*, and this brings the renewal that we hunger for and need. Outward change follows. Power from God transforms us first from within and makes us capable of what we would otherwise be quite incapable of. *It's not our power - it's the power of the Spirit - God's power.* In Paul's phraseology, we no longer live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Paul speaks of this when he says: *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away. Everything has become new."* Putting aside our old nature and putting on the new is the only thing that can help us. And of course it's hard simply because it *is* a matter of the Spirit - not something which comes naturally to us. Our nature is to do as we wish, to exercise our own will. So in consequence there's the power struggle we have noted: the old with the new - the outward with the inner. Jesus often made it clear that outward things are unimportant - it is the inner things that have power because they signal genuineness as

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opposed to appearance or outward show. Remember for example his rebuking of those who pray mainly to be heard by others? (Matthew 6:5-8)

....The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart. (1 Samuel 16:7)

The challenge for a New Year

And so as our Christian walk takes us through 2012, if we ask ourselves in what direction our lives should proceed, then there is only one question that matters and it is this: **Which spirit will rule over me - the spirit of the world or the Spirit of God?** We all face the great either/or: the devil or God, Satan or Christ, continuing with the old life, or its rejection for the new with its own challenge to allow God to change us.

A New Year, with its promise of Springtime on the horizon - the season of regeneration, rebirth and renewal, is an apt time to resolve to accept God's power in our lives and allow the Holy Spirit the freedom to daily change, renew and regenerate us in accordance with his will. *May your New Year be a blessed one.*

Errol.

In 1982 an American named Eddie Espinosa wrote the lyrics and the music to a short devotional song entitled 'Change my Heart O God.' The song has now become world famous. There is a simple four line chorus. Part of the song is duplicated below. If you would like to hear it click on the link below:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CEtSHWFE6-w>

Change my heart O God	You are the potter
Make it ever true	I am the clay
Change my heart O God	Mold me and make me
May I be like You	This is what I pray

Though he had been a Christian for many years he was beginning to see a lot of things in his life that needed to be discarded. In his own words: **"The closer you get to the Lord in all his brightness, the better you can see the things in your own life that need to be changed"**

Web link to this edition: <http://church-in-france.com/church-publications/reflections/>
Comments/suggestions regarding this leaflet please to Errol Niblett (NiblettEL@mac.com)



Theme: Allowing God to Change us

"For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do - this I keep on doing" (St. Paul in Romans 7:19).

. . . At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! (2 Corinthians 5:16-17.)

Then he said to them all, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me' (Luke 9:23)

Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
(Psalm 51:10-11)



Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. (Titus 3:5 KJV.)

The Chaplaincy of Christ The Good Shepherd,
Poitou-Charentes, France, in the Anglican Diocese in Europe.
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