

## The Power to Change By Kent Heaton

Nothing is more remarkable than the change that took place over three days in the Syrian city of Damascus nearly two-thousand years ago. Saul had come to the city to bring “any who were of the Way, whether men or women ... bound to Jerusalem” (Acts 9:2). His intensity of threats and murder against the disciples (Acts 9:1) had put him at the point of the Jewish spear to root out and destroy the followers of Christ. He confessed later to Agrippa that he thought he must do many “things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This I also did in Jerusalem and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities” (Acts 26:9-11). The aged Apostle would reflect to his young protégé Timothy that he was a “blasphemer, a persecutor and an insolent man” (1Tim. 1:13) and the chief of sinners (1Tim. 1:15).

But then came his mission to Damascus. No one would have foreseen the change that would take place in the life of this Benjamite; this Hebrew of Hebrews and Pharisee. Saul of Tarsus met Jesus of Nazareth and Saul's life would forever be altered. He “heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ and he said, ‘Who are You, Lord.’ Then the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you kick against the goads.’ So he, trembling and astonished, said, ‘Lord, what do You want me to do?’ Then the Lord said to him, ‘Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.’” (Acts 9:4-6) Blinded, Saul arose and entered the city and “he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank” (Acts 9:9).

Ananias would come and show Saul the work the Lord had for him to do. His sight returned, “he arose and was baptized” (Acts 9:18) and “spent some days with the disciples at Damascus” (Acts 9:19). For the rest of his life, Saul would be known as Paul the apostle and always live for Christ – the one he earlier sought to destroy. How could such a change take place in a man?

While Paul characterized himself as the persecutor and those things he carried out were done “in all good conscience” (Acts 23:1) he had one focus that remained constant in his life. Saul of Tarsus loved the Almighty Jehovah God. What he did against the “Way” was because in his mind they stood against his God. His passion for God was intense – though misguided – and he never offered an excuse for what he did. His actions were in ignorance according to unbelief (1Tim. 1:13). That unbelief became intense belief in Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God when he learned the truth.

Saul did not fancy himself with the pride of men nor with the religious motives of selfishness. When he saw that he was wrong, he made immediate change and “took no prisoners” (literally and figuratively). His change took place in the words of the Lord – “not as I will, but as thou will” (Matt. 26:39). It was total; it was complete; it was his dying devotion to God that led him to serve the Son of God.

If Saul of Tarsus can be a faithful disciple of Christ, why is it so hard for you and me to change? What do we have in our lives that are more difficult to overcome than

what Saul gave up immediately? The power to change is left to the will of man. We change what we want to change. To serve the Lord, our change must be total.

### Winning Team

“But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'; nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary...that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually” (1Cor. 12:20-22, 25-27).

The legendary football coach Vince Lombardi was asked what it took to make a winning team. He said, “There are a lot of coaches with good ball clubs who know the fundamentals and have plenty of discipline but still don't win the game. Then you come to the third ingredient: if you're going to play together as a team, you've got to care for one another. You've got to love each other. Each player has to be thinking about the next guy and saying to himself: 'If I don't block that man, Paul is going to get his legs broken. I have to do my job well in order that he can do his.' The difference between mediocrity and greatness is the feeling these guys have for each other.” (Quoted in Leadership, Vol. 15, No. 3)

As members of the Lord's church let us truly love and care for one another. Let us take seriously the Lord's command to “love one another” so that we can be a winning team.

### Until the Belly Does Its Share

“But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'; nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary” (1Cor. 12:20-22).

One day it occurred to the members of the body that they were doing all the work and that the belly was having all the food. So they held a meeting and after a long discussion decided to strike work until the belly consented to take its proper share of the work. So for a day or two the hands refused to take the food, the mouth refused to receive it, and the teeth had no work to do. But after a day or two, members began to find that they themselves were not in very active condition. The hands could hardly move, the mouth was all parched and dry, while the legs were unable to support the rest. Thus, they found that even the belly, in its dull quiet way, was doing necessary work for the body, and that all must work together or the body would go to pieces. (From Aesop)

### A Moments Wisdom

When you have given nothing, ask for nothing.  
Nobody who ever gave his best regretted it.

If a window of opportunity appears, don't pull down the shade.

Age wrinkles the body. Quitting wrinkles the soul.

If you are planning for a year, sow rice; if you are planning for a decade, plant trees; if you are planning for a lifetime, teach people.

If you really do put a small value upon yourself, rest assured that the world will not raise your price.

We lie the loudest when we lie to ourselves.

A thousand words will not leave so deep an impression as one good work.

Use soft words when making hard arguments.