

Life as God Sees It, Change as God Does It

In trouble? There is hope. Near someone who is in trouble? There is help. Let God's view of life and change give you personal hope and ministry courage. Let God's simple metaphors light your way.

Heat (What is your situation?)

You and I always react to things that happen around us. Whether it is the scorching heat of difficulty or the unexpected rain of blessing, you always respond to whatever comes down on you. The Bible is honest about the things that happen here. You will recognize the world of the Bible because it is the world you live in every day.

Thorns (What is the attitude of my heart? What is my behavior resulting from the heat? What are the consequences?)

You and I are never passive. We always respond to the Heat (or Rain) in our lives. Maybe it's a tough boss or a crazy extended family, a rebellious child or a chronic sickness. Maybe it's a new career opportunity or a newly acquired inheritance. Whatever it is, the Bible helps us to see how we react to the Heat in our **hearts** and our outward **behavior**. It reminds us that sinners respond to the fallen world sinfully, and each reaction yields a harvest of **consequences**.

Thorns are about the biblical category of **fleshly wisdom**, those foolish **behaviors** that come all too naturally to us when hard things happen. Someone speaks unkindly to us, so we let our bitterness grow. Something unexpected happens and we respond by denying, avoiding, blaming, or seeking to take control. Negative things come our way and we allow ourselves to doubt God and let our participation in worship and ministry wane.

We are blessed with unexpected money and we spend it on ourselves. We don't get the raise we thought we deserve, so we work halfheartedly. Scripture makes it clear that these **behaviors** are not forced upon us by the pressures of the situation. What I do comes from inside me, the **heart**. The things that happen to me will influence my **behavior** but never determine them. Rather, these **behaviors** flow out of the thoughts and motives of my **heart**. This is why you can have five people in the same situation with five different **behaviors**!

Fruit (What is the attitude of my heart? What is my behavior resulting from the heat? What are the consequences?)

Because of what Christ has done for us, we can respond to the same old pressures in a brand-new way from our **heart**. When blessed, we look for ways to bless others. In trouble, we run to God and not away from him. We don't seek to avoid life, but move toward it with courage and faith. We don't take vengeance but entrust ourselves to the only wise Judge. This is the life the presence of God and the grace of Christ make possible. These new **behaviors** produce good Fruit (**consequences**) in our lives and in the lives of others.

Look at your life through the eyes of your Redeemer. Let him reveal your **heart** and your **behavior** as well. The courage of self-examination leads to the hope of lasting personal change when God is involved. Emmanuel has entered your story and nothing will ever be the same again! **How is God calling me to seek him in repentance and faith?**

Cross (Define God's role + provision in this situation. Who is God & what does he say and do in Christ?)

It should be a tremendous encouragement to us that the God of the Bible presents himself as **an ever present help in trouble** (Ps. 46:1). The ultimate example is Christ, who took the name Emmanuel and came to a fallen world to live, die, and rise again. He continues to be **God with us** as he indwells us with his Spirit. He gives us everything we need to respond to life in godly ways. The promise of the Cross extends beyond renewed strength or enhanced wisdom. Christ gives us himself and in so doing remakes us from the inside out. If you are a believer, you are in the process of being remade to reflect the character of Jesus himself. And your Lord is employing every circumstance and relationship in your life to accomplish that goal.

The attitude of our **heart** determines our **behavior** when we face heat and that leads to **consequences**. Our problem in dealing with change, often or even most of the time is to try to deal with the **heat**, the symptoms-- our **behavior** or the **consequences** and ignore or not even identify the real problem with the **heart**. However, the only way to change or solve problems or trials is to submit to the control of the Holy Spirit and first address the real problem the attitude of our **heart**.

Adapted by Henry Luke from "How People Change" by Timothy Lane and Paul David Trippe pages 92-93

