



Dear Friends,

There were stories in this week's press about whether it's possible for people to change the way they behave. Interest in this issue was generated by Prime Minister, Scott Morrison's recent statement, in which he promised that, if re-elected, he will change. Mr Morrison said: "Australians know that I can be a bit of a bulldozer when it comes to issues ... as we go into this next period on the other side of this election, I know there are things that are going to have to change with the way I do things."

Jenna Price, a newspaper columnist and academic, wrote about her own life transformation, and interviewed experts on whether people can change. Not just behaviour. But personality. What we might otherwise call, a person's character. She asked Carolyn MacCann, associate professor in psychology at the University of Sydney, whether it is really possible to change deep down. MacCann says it's possible, but change like that requires "daily, deliberate practice." Price also asked Michael Platow, a professor of psychology at the Australian National University, for his thoughts on change. Platow believes it's possible, "but only if we can see the real benefit in making that change and have the right context, the right incentives," like a longer career, better quality of life or improved relationships.

What does the Bible say? **Jesus says that our bad thoughts, desires, words and behaviours come from within us. It is, "out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come"** (Mark 7:21). We are not made morally unclean by what is external to us. Rather, "all these evils come from inside and defile a person" (Mark 7:23). The message of the Christian gospel is that deep and lasting change in human character is only possible if we deal with the moral uncleanness in our hearts. Being intentional about change helps. So too, do incentives for change. But what we require more than anything else is gospel change – for God to give us a new heart by placing our trust in Jesus as our king and saviour. We need God to wash away our sin by Jesus' atoning sacrifice, and for the Holy Spirit to give us the power – the same power that raised Jesus from the dead – so that, having received Christ, we can live out the reality of belonging to him.

God Bless
Mark Adams