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" C H A N G E A B L E N E S S " .

An Address by Mr. P. W. Heward,
At Wattam's Restaurant, Aldgate,
8th July, 1919.

OUTLINE:

1. Purpose of heart.
2. Yea, Yea; Nay, Nay; and 2 Cor. 1.
3. Some things that differ, and how the Holy Spirit witnesses against self's decisiveness and unreliability.
4. Ups and downs in the Christian experience, - its causes and effects.

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"With Whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning". In such words the servant of God rightly describes God. "No variableness". In the distant past, and before the distant past, yea before the times and seasons God loved. The object of His love has not been reached, but reached it will be. His love remains with constant delight, and He is not hindered by failure in His memory, nor by failure in His strength. "With Whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning": - We look through the Scriptures, and we see that God was pleased to lay hold of Abraham. "I took your father Abraham, I called him alone". In such precious words the prophets graphically describe the manifestation of God's own choice. But to Abraham was the promise given that he should be the heir of the world, that not only his family, but all nations should be blessed in him. The promised Seed was to tarry. Years have passed, and Israel have been thrice into captivity, and from the third they have not returned. Is the promise of God broken? Nay. "With Whom is no variableness, neither shadow that is cast by turning". The daily trials of our daily life are often larger to us than the events of history. Oftentimes to a believer, today's burdens, or it may be tomorrow's wrongly appropriated burdens, seem to him as immense as all the problems which surround hundreds of saints in hundreds of years. THAT is the perspective of ~~with~~ selfish unbelief. But having loved His own which were in the world, the Lord loves them still. There is no changeableness with God. The kindest men of this world are variable. We cannot always find the same

sympathy from them. Sometimes they indulge us when they ought to be severe with us. At other times they are indifferent when they might be expected to show interest. Seek to be dependable; but in the full sense of the word, have you yet met one who is absolutely to be depended upon. But of God the believer may feel respecting today (and for tomorrow when tomorrow comes and IS today) - may feel the preciousness of these words:- "With Whom is no variableness neither shadow that is cast by turning". And beloved friends, the grace of God manifested in His fixed purpose, and the fixed purpose of God manifested in His grace, alike awaken our praise and call us to a purpose of heart in response. We love Him because He first loved us, and as His love is unchangeable, should our love be always changing? How can it be? "PURPOSE OF HEART". This is a need. When Barnabas reached Antioch and saw the grace of God he was glad, and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord; for he was a good man, and therefore he emphasized purpose of heart. The Holy Spirit has this witness throughout. We need to have a definiteness. You will never live a praiseful life without definiteness. "O W LORD MY HEART IS FIXED, I WILL SING AND GIVE PRAISE". The one whose heart is not fixed stops the tune in the middle and begins grumbling, and thus there is no reliability in the daily life. But if by the grace of God we have fixed hearts we shall be kept to the privilege of giving praise even with our glory. The whole of Scripture guides us in the same way. You can remember different men of God who were very definite, and would not be shifted from their purpose Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself and neither the prince of the eunuchs nor Melzar could move him away from his holy firmness. Again we see the firmness of heart wherewith he went into his room as aforetime and prayed and knelt upon his knees three times a day. Why should he be affected by circumstances? Circumstances were transitory, God was not. The will of God was more real to Daniel than the will of man, and so as he continued to do as he did "aforetime". The man of God had purpose of heart and therefore

purpose of action, - let us ever link the two.

I suppose we all know the tendency without looking further a field than ourselves, - the "tendency" to be somewhat satisfied with an inner life, WHEN we ought to emphasize an outer life; and an OUTER life WHEN we ought to emphasize an inner life. For example, if we ought to do something for the Lord we encourage ourselves the important thing is the heart. But if we want to be active for the Lord, we are occupied with THIS, and forget the need for quietness of heart before Him. We want the two parts of the life cultivated, but when they are in their due proportion, purpose of heart must be manifested in activity just as much as the fruit tree must be known by its fruits. Daniel did not simply DESIRE to keep to certain arrangements, but he DETERMINED he would keep to them and acted accordingly. There was purpose of life as well as purpose of heart. He would not vary. We know that God looks at the heart, but God looks at the actions as well. That statement is not given to excuse us but to make us feel that God's view is wider than that of man. Naaman's willingness to compromise is the house of Rimmon was not the willingness which God's people should have. They are called to purpose of heart. "Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." "The God of all grace Who hath called us into His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you". The apostle usually visited round the assemblies CONFIRMING the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them. With what object? That they might continue in the faith, and he illustrated this same principle, for he said truly, None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy. He could say to Timothy at the end of his life, "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, PURPOSE." Paul had a godly purpose, a godly determination, and this must still be sought by believers "Let my heart be SOUND in Thy statutes, that I be not ashamed"; and a similar

aspect is wrapped up in the words. "I have stuck unto Thy testimonies". Yet again we know the stress on CLEAVING unto God's truth. Beloved friends, WE need more of this spirituality in our daily life. WE need more purpose of heart that nothing can turn us aside, - purpose of heart which will be able to concentrate. I suppose that we all fall very far short of concentration. There are some dear children of God who seem quite unable to concentrate at all, because they are quite unwilling to expect the Lord will give power for concentration. None of us can be said to have reached completeness of concentration. I grant that our mental abilities are weakened through the fall, even as our physical, and semi-physical, faculties. With perfect concentration I suppose we should forget nothing we learn. we forget, because what we learn does not make a sufficiently deep impression. If I could ~~XXXXX~~ concentrate my mind perfectly on anything I should get it so fixed in the mind that it would never get rubbed out. But when a number of little things all come in at once, and when a brother is thinking of a spiritual subject, and thinking of something else, and a third thing at the same time, the mind, embracing these different topics, has no real fruitfulness. That is a grave danger. We all know how it is possible to take the mind off other things. I dare say while you are in this meeting there are occasions when you entirely forget all about the traffic, you hear no noise at all. We knew well ~~how~~ how it is quite possible to have the mind wondrously concentrated from surrounding circumstances in this way, to have the mind concentrated so that nothing may affect or disturb, unless some extraordinary circumstance comes along, and then the mind is shaken from this concentration by an unpleasant and not altogether helpful awakening. Now what I am suggesting as to the mind. I want to suggest as to the ~~XXXX~~ heart. We need a concentration of heart which will not give way to anything else. When we know the mind of the Lord, we must with purpose of heart keep to THIS. It is so enjoyable to try SOMETHING fresh. I have rarely met a brother who does not like "something fresh". I usually find it is easier in my own experience to do some-

thing fresh, and it usually seems so beautifully easy that one feels quite sure it is just meant for him or her. If you are drawn to learn a language, for the glory of God, you find problems; then look at another language, you will find the other language is ever so much easier, and it will be very easy to persuade yourself that it is the Lord's leading to learn the other language because it is easier. You will feel you are making such rapid progress with it, you just look at it and remember a number of the words, you are very encouraged at the outset, and when you have had two or three months of it and reach some trials, you will look on another language, and have the same encouragement, and you will finish up by knowing nothing. This is one example, but there are hundreds of other examples. There are very few things that become always mentally enjoyable when you continue therein. The very study of the word becomes sometimes a mental strain, a physical strain, but this is well. If we were always encouraged physically when we were engaged in ~~the~~ spiritual things, I am afraid we should have ulterior motives. It is well to have a strain, it is well to have a stress, that we may have an opportunity for developing faith and developing purpose of heart, in order that we may cling to that which is the Lord's will. The important thing, therefore, beloved friends, is to know what is God's purpose and then to keep to it. I suppose we have all met brethren (without stepping outside our NEAREST acquaintance, for we do need to remember our FIRST solemn responsibility), who have large intentions, and who never seem to put those intentions into practice. They always want to do something more ~~in~~ for the Lord, something more. Something more, and they make up their mind they WILL do it. When? Ah, this is the danger. We are always waiting for some further encouragement to come, but unless we know how to use discouragement we do not know how to the encouragement. Always grasp your difficulties with joy, because if you can use a difficulty to the glory of the Lord, He will often give you the removal of the difficulty to use that to His glory. If you know how to use shortened time for the Lord, the Lord will teach you how to use lengthened time, and He

may grant you your request to have it. In so speaking of shortened time, I do not mean that a child of God should suffer himself to neglect spiritual things for overtime of daily occupation, or whatever it may be, but what we need to do is to use every odd moment for the Lord - (we all fall short) - and then we shall be trained in purpose of heart, and the Lord will entrust those who have purpose of heart much more to employ for Him. The Lord is training His people, and oft-times they ask Him to give them certain advantages. He is waiting till they show their power to use them, and they are waiting for the advantages, and thus there is a grave mistake. We so frequently pray for certain blessings to come; we should often ~~xxx~~ act more wisely if we prayed to be in a CONDITION to receive the blessings; because ~~from~~ frequently we should be damaged by misusing the blessings, because we are not ready for them. What we want is to be prepared by the grace of God that we may be able to be trusted with progress without boasting, pride, or selfish misuse. The Great Example of purpose of heart is our beloved Lord, Who set His face stedfastly, set His face as a flint. He would not shrink from anything. From eternity He loved, in time He loved, and to eternity there will be the effects of His unchanging love.

But what about 2 Cor. 1, - Here we find the apostle gives us a little account of his thoughts and intentions. He tells us in verse 15, In this confidence I was minded to come unto you before that ye might have a second blessing, and to pass through you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward ~~W~~ Judea. When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness; (literally - "THE lightness", the lightness with which they changed him), or the things which I purpose do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea, yea; and nay, nay. The little story of his experience is as follows. He had thought to go to Corinth, and on from Corinth to Macedonia in the North, to return south to Corinth, and to be sent from Corinth by ship ~~pre-~~sumably to Judea. But he had delayed going to Corinth. Now the professing

believers at Corinth contained among them some who were ready to pick holes in his character, and they said, Look at the lightness with which he treats us, he says that he will come, and he wants to abide with us, but at the present time he does not fulfil the words in 1 Cor. 16. Now he does fulfil those words in one sense. It is a very beautiful fact that where the apostle makes a statement in Scripture he attaches certain words so that if the plan is changed the inspiration is not altered. By inspiration he records his feelings. If in 1 Cor. 16 he had said, I SHALL do certain things, and had spoken prophetically, then if he had changed from this, inspiration would have been attacked. He does not. It is another case of the Scripture on the edge of the precipice, but never falling over. He kept to all that had been said by inspiration, but his intention had been to go to Corinth before, and they said, Look at the lightness. He does not tell them here why he refrained. At the end of 2 Corinthians he gives the reason, - "To spare you I came not as yet". He felt that when he came he would not find them as he would, but that he would find them as he would not, and the result would be that there would be trial and disappointment, and the use of his authority for the casting down, and so he waited. The passages in which he gives information are ch. 1:23, and 12:20, and the 13th chapter, (1:23 particularly). Now, beloved friends, was it lightness for the apostle to hold back in LOVE? He waited for the believers to repent. Was that lightness? We answer, Of course not. So he says, Do I purpose according to the flesh that with me there should be ~~any~~ yea, yea; nay, nay. If I say "I will come", I will come. If I say "I will not come", I will not come. Yea, yea; nay, nay. There are some who are very obstinate and if they make up their mind, they will cling to that at all costs. There are some who are naturally very changeable. As a rule those who are changeable can see the defects of their brethren, and visa versa. But we often need much more grace to see our own defects. Even the devil will always show us someone else's defects. Do not think I am merely making that statement in a haphazard way. Zech. 3 is clear

upon that point. The devil's special work is to delight to point out other people's defects. You will find the same thing brought out in Rev. 12. I grant that it is important not to be misled, we must not be blind to defects, but if we are dealing with our own sins first, and ONLY if we are so doing, are we able to HELP other brethren in dealing with their defects.

I hope you will not think me unkind if I hold in my hand the prayer suggestion paper at the present time. The apostle was concerned that none should think he used lightness and changeableness, that with him there should be the yea, yea. - I will keep to what I have said; or the nay, nay, - I will keep to the reverse. The thought does come into my mind that possibly the charge that was wrongly made against Paul might be helpfully taken to heart by some of us. I think there are too many changes from our prayer suggestion paper. As a rule there are not tendencies to have the "Yea, yea, I will keep to this, or I will keep to that". That is not so much the error, but the error, - of changeableness unnecessarily is very easy. We all find it so. Let us now return to 2 Cor. 1. Notice that the obstinacy which says "Yea, yea" is often linked with pride, one is unwilling to alter one's attitude; often linked with selfishness, keep to one's own plan. You remember how Jonah failed, he desired that Ninevah should be destroyed in 40 days. He appeared more concerned for his reputation than for 120,000 infants. And the Lord dealt with that attitude very firmly, but very graciously, to His servant. The apostle turns everything to good account. He had proposed to do a certain thing IF the Lord was willing. The Lord had apparently showed him that it was not the right TIME to go, he had therefore kept back awhile. People attacked his character. They would have approved of Jonah in his strange attitude; but Paul was willing to have further guidance from the Lord. The Lord can give arrangements as He pleases, and the Lord can give experience in appreciation of His arrangements as He pleases. The first case will illustrate this with regard to Abraham. Go and offer thy son. When he IS manifestly willing, the Lord tells him he is not to do so.

Should there have been with Abraham the "Yea, yea, I WILL use the knife"? Of course not. We enter into the fact there, but may it not be that we should have an appreciation of the Lord's will in different ways at different times as to action. I do not mean as to doctrine. Doctrine cannot be changed. But David did well that it was in his heart to build a house for the Lord. Yet he could not carry this out. It was not the Lord's will. He was therefore to be content with PREPARATION; Paul did well that it was in his heart to go to Corinth at that time, and it was right to tell them that if the Lord will he would come. But "if the Lord will" was not only a bare utterance to him. It was a reality. And if they were not ready for this visit, and if the result of mentioning his hope did not include spiritual readiness on their part, he would hold back even if it were misunderstood, rather than not with the speed of the flesh. The flesh is either dilatory, or excitedly quick. The apostle has taught us a very beautiful lesson of slowness for all discipline in an assembly, because one longs to have restoration rather than exclusion. Hence a godly slowness; - but we know how the flesh comes in to try to interfere with this, either to hurry in one way or another, and to spoil the slow, but steady, and real work of God. The apostle turns the subject and gives a beautiful little reference to the Gospel of the grace of God. He says, "Our preaching was not yea and nay". We said we hoped to come and then we did not come, and you say "Yea and nay". Ah, he said, if our plan of coming varied, our Gospel has not varied. In Christ is "Yea", there is no "Nay" in Him. And thus he reminds them that though he was not quite sure where the Lord would have him be, a few weeks ahead, he was quite sure that the doctrine of the Lord was. Whether it be His doctrine today, or a few weeks ahead, that was one vast "Yea", and one precious "Nay" against the evils of the flesh and the world and the devil.

Let us prayerfully distinguish things that differ, and realize that the Spirit of God witnesses against self's decisiveness and against unreliability alike. We know very well the tendency of the human heart to genera-

lize quickly, or to draw inferences quickly. We go forth to the Jews, and we speak of God's nature in all His gloriousness, and the Jew asks us concerning God being three Persons, and quickly draws his inference from the unity of God. Again we have those who draw ~~xxx~~ inferences from the fact that Christ died. They say He is dead. Oh no, we answer, He is raised from the dead. What a vast difference between "He died" and "He is dead". What a vast difference, be it noted, in this connection between the different rendering "Ye died", and the error "Ye are dead". How blessed "Ye died - and your life is hid with Christ in God". How precious that our hearts should know the fact that though we died we were not left in the grave. We have been raised through the faith of the operation of God, and we rejoice in a living faith in a living Lord. Now, beloved friends, we must distinguish between things that differ throughout. There are some who think that if the Spirit of God has His right place in a meeting there cannot be order, that there cannot be any knowledge of His arrangements beforehand; but they cannot produce Scripture in this connection. The Spirit of God must not be bound in this way. There are those who are afraid that if the leading of the Lord is recognized there will be confusion, and THEY, unlike those of whom I have just made mention, seem to be afraid lest there should be a putting ~~xxx~~ aside of order, and they rather emphasize order than the leading of the Spirit. But why not the leading of the Holy Spirit before AND at the time. We have only to link His guidance and spiritual order, and see how precious they are when united. It is so in everything. The precious teaching of Scripture as to man's accountability and God's sovereign grace has been misused to produce much controversy among men. The position of a believer as having not only a righteousness but a new life, and no longer being in a state of sin, and yet having the flesh in him, - this likewise has been perverted to occasion controversy. But why do we not appreciate the twofoldness of much of truth, and avoid human attempts to explain, and avoid varying the Divine words, and so making confusion and disorder.

Now, beloved friends, in this connection let us be careful of extremes. Do not be decisive in a selfish way, but be determined to expect to know the will of the Lord. Write "If the Lord will" across your life, but do not on that account be unreliable. If a dear child of God when asked to have fellowship in any service for the Lord says "If the Lord will I may be able to do that", and you find he continually alters arrangements and suggestions, and says, "The Lord led me to this, and the Lord led me to that", you think there is something wrong. The Lord does not lead to make confusion or to make disorder. The brother who is truly led by the Lord will be more reliable than other brethren, though he will not make an absolute statement "I am sure I can do this". We are not to be those who have no mind at all. We are not to be those who are simply passive. The Lord has told us to love Him with our MIND, to present our bodies to Him, including all our varied faculties, and we are to know the renewing of the MIND. We are not to be simply dream-occupied creatures, or machines whom the Lord can use without our personal entering into the privilege. We are NOT made into machines. We are to be those who know from God his will, and who say, Yes, by grace, we will do this, we will do that,, and so forth. The apostle made some very definite statements "If the Lord will, I hope to see you", "If the Lord will, I am going to a certain place. I hope to stay at a certain place, and do certain work for the Lord;" and so forth. You are not told that it befits a child of God to say "If the Lord will, we may live, but we cannot say what will happen AT ALL, we just wait for the Lord to lead at the last moment". Nay, "If the Lord will we shall live, and do this or that". Be willing for the Lord's "or", but expect to know much of His will as to doing THIS or THAT. Anticipate that if you are in the will of the Lord He will cause things to fit in rightly. If a child of God were to act in earthly business in the irregular way which many think spirituality, would he not bring dishonor to the Name of the Lord? Suppose that he were to stay away from his ordinary occupation and say he felt led so to do. Suppose he were to take time off in the middle of a day and feel he was called in this direction would

it be to the glory of God? Beloved friends, the Lord has appointed being employed, and therefore He has appointed a certain measure of "contract", if I might so put it. Therefore contract and arrangement and promise, as distinct from binding vow and oath cannot be against the will of the Lord for His people. We are to be reliable and trustworthy persons to the praise and glory of His grace, and must carefully distinguish things that differ.

And now a few words on "Ups and Downs in Christian Experiences". What are the causes? Physically we can learn something in this connection. What are the causes of our physical failures? We sometimes catch cold. We can trace how we caught the cold, not I grant on every occasion, but it may be we came into contact with someone else who had a bad cold, or we shut ourselves up in a room with others who were suffering from cold. Now there are children of God who shut themselves up with those who are suffering from a spiritual cold; and spiritual coldness; and they wonder if they catch the coldness. We often have spiritual illnesses through contact. Again, if you eat no food you will find your physical strength weakened. The Lord has appointed physical food. So with spiritual food. Probably the majority of people eat far too much physically and too little spiritually. If we do not eat enough physically just to maintain strength we shall soon find ourselves weak, for example, in a bleak atmosphere. The world has a very bleak atmosphere. Unless we have sufficient food spiritually we shall find ourselves weakened. Many of our spiritual "ups and downs" are easily traceable. Possibly they are more easily traceable by other people. But those who will readily, and even with a measure of forbidden anxiety, put their bodies in the hands of a doctor who may not even be a believer, to give them medicines, the contents of which they do not trouble to find out, are very unwilling to receive guidance from fellow believers, and unwilling for precious doses of that medicine, of the contents of which they have every reason to be well confident. This is strange, but it is natural. So many are quite willing to give the doctor's opinion as to their body, and why a certain thing has been brought about. But if other believers try to guide them

as to the cause of the spiritual trouble they are quite sure it is something else, and the result is they may go on for years without ever detecting where the difficulty really lies; and hence they fail to have that spiritual strength which God has appointed for His blood-bought people. We need, beloved friends, to be more concerned in these matters. The parallel, I think, is wise, because God has appointed teaching for us through our bodies. As the physical frame is weakened so is the spiritual frame. Work it out more, even as the Lord taught spiritual things through miracles on the body. Now we come to another Scripture argument as to the causes of spiritual estrangement. Take the case of David: Did he rebel against the Lord in the matter of Uriah the Hittite at once? No, he began by TARRYING at Jerusalem. He stayed at home when he ought to have been at war, and the result was he was in danger. I need hardly say I have a spiritual parallel in mind, and it is possible to stay at home even when you are in the street preaching. In this spiritual parallel it is easy to have that slothfulness when there should be the spiritual war which becomes the children of God. Take the case of Peter. Did he deny the Lord in a moment? Not at all. In the garden the Lord said to him "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation". He did not watch. "Could ye not watch with Me one hour"? The result was that through lack of watching, and lack of prayer, he was taken off his guard. His intentions were right when he drew the sword, his intentions were right when he followed the Lord, his intentions were right when he went in to see the end, but he was too weak. The spirit was willing but the flesh was weak. But why did he fail to watch and pray in the garden? The failure came BEFORE THAT. "Though all forsake Thee yet will not I". Self-confidence, lack of prayer, - then the very definite departure from the Lord. Oh, beloved friends, sin does not begin in its open form. There are some roots. ~~NE~~ Get down to the beginnings of failure, the beginnings of departure from the Lord. There is surely a forcefulness in the words about Erastus. "Erastus

ABODE at Corinth". Then again we think of Paul going to Rome, and on the way to Jerusalem. There was a determination even when the Lord showed SOMETHING ELSE, (Acts 21:4). The result showed certain failure. The effects of self-will in our heart, and of laziness, are grievous before our Gracious God. To ourselves - loss of enjoyment now, and loss of reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ. To others - inability to help them. These who are pleasing the Lord are saddened, those who are grieving the Lord are often encouraged by our failures, encouraged to approve of their OWN departures ~~for~~ from Him, encouraged by feeling "If others who have known the Lord longer than I hesitate, I need not blame myself so much", and thus WE lower the whole standard of Christian godliness. How important it is that we should seek by grace to walk in the Spirit Enoch walked WITH GOD ~~FOR~~ 300 YEARS. That was hardly changeableness. May it be our experience in its measure, as we heartily and earnestly look for our Lord from heaven.
