

Ephesians 4:17-32 Tools for Transformation Part 1

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[0:00] to the Lord, personal habits that need to be modified, positive habits that need to be developed. We all have something. I hope, I trust the Lord helps you to see.

It's probably more than one thing. But he's calling you to grow in and press further into him with. And the deal with that is, is that in order to get there, you have to have a certain set of tools that the Bible provides.

So what I would really love to do over the next two weeks is to give you a set of biblical tools, not only to affect change in your own life according to the power given to you through the Lord, but also to help other people change.

In reality, probably 80% of my pastoral counseling load is just helping people use these tools. And I really hope that as a church, we can just grow more deeply and more familiarity with how God changes someone, the tools for transformation.

I would love it for all of us to just become more familiar with those. The thing about tools, because I'm a big tool guy, both physical tools and I love tech as well, is that whenever you see a tool, it has some promise of making your life easier, but it almost always makes your life harder on the front end because you have to learn to use the tool.

[1:16] I remember, you know, just when I decided, okay, I'm going to start cutting my own firewood. Well, great. Great. But also, I almost cut my leg off with a chainsaw at one point.

And I had to develop, redevelop calluses that I had lost through my years of suburban softness. Well, I had some good calluses at one point, but I had to rebuild those.

And, you know, it's just this whole thing of learning how to swing the ball again and all this kind of stuff. And it's this whole learning curve to just get good at a tool. And what I think I see a lot in our consumeristic Christian culture is people would rather offload those tools to pastoral teams and tap into them when they really need help changing in one critical area where the feedback is getting really bad, instead of just learning, taking the time to learn how to use the tools God has given all of us so that we can see transformation taking place in our lives.

So what I'm going to ask from you this week and next is I'm going to ask you to be patient with this sermon in particular because here I'm just laying out the tools.

And then come back next week and just hear the application. And then I'd also ask you that you not just make this a one-time listen, that you consider listening to this sermon series again in a couple weeks or a couple months.

[2:40] Because I really think we are so much more useful not only to ourselves, to our family, and to our church, if we understand how God transforms people. And I'm going to do my best to be as practical as possible next week and as theoretical and theological as possible this week, or as necessary, I guess you could say, this week.

Okay, with that said, let's get into our text, beginning in chapter 4 of Ephesians, verse 17. Now this I say and testify to the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.

They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

But that is not the way you learned Christ. Assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner

of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

[4:10] Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. So what I want to do initially here is just offer some broad observations about the structure of this passage and help you to begin to lean into some of what God is offering you in terms of a toolkit. The first thing I'd want you to notice is right there at the very beginning, the very first verse of our text, the word must. It says you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do.

[5:26] Now, two concepts I want to introduce first. The first one is what I think is the greatest pain of being a Christian, and that is what I would call identity lag. Identity lag.

You know, imagine driving a car where there was a, let's say, a five-second delay between your turning the wheel and the actual wheel turning.

Or say, a five-second delay between when you hit the brake and when the brakes actually engage. Like, that would be a really difficult car to drive.

And many of you gamers know about the term lag from that world. There's a gap between your input on the control and when your player actually moves in the particular way it's supposed to.

Well, I think I just want to say to all of you, I hope we understand that this verse, this section in half the New Testament pretty much, exists because there is a lag between what Christ has done inside of you and the way you live.

[6:31] And that stinks. It stinks that God has uploaded a new heart and a new set of desires. And we are, in Christ's new creations, justified by His grace upon our conversion to Christ.

And then we find this lag between what our heart desires to do and what we actually do with our lives. That's a very frustrating experience.

Imagine driving a car like that for your whole life. And then one day, someone gets you a new car and there's no lag anymore. You had been compensating.

You'd been thinking ahead. Five seconds ahead your whole life. You'd been kind of living in dread and traffic because every time, you know, you'd get, you'd need to hit the brake. You'd just know, like, oh my goodness, this is just like a whole complex thing and I've got to figure out how to brake in time and so on and so forth.

And then one day, you get a new car and that car just works like it's supposed to. I want to make sure that we always remember that no matter how much we strive for sanctification, no matter how importantly we press into holiness, our ultimate hope is for the day of redemption referenced in this passage when we will all get new cars and our hearts and our bodies and our minds and it'll all work.

[7:58] And really, truly, for the Christian, this is the great desire. This burns at the great desire for heaven, not to play golf every day or to be able to see all your relatives all at once.

The real earnest yearning of the Christian is for a practical holiness that matches what we know to be true, what we know God calls us to. And we're going to work on that the rest of our lives and we're going to be able to, in some areas, see less lag than others.

But in reality, this passage exists because that's just a part of the deal of being saved yet still struggling with indwelling sin, still struggling with the flesh, still living in a broken world.

We're just going to deal with some identity lag. Now, one temptation there is frustration and despair. I've felt it many times.

You can see Paul feeling it or someone Paul is writing about feeling it in Romans 7. Why do I do the things I don't want to do and not do the things I want to do? You can see the struggle. You probably feel the struggle.

[9:03] And so one temptation is despair, but there is another temptation. And that is to think, well, that's just the deal. That's just how it comes. That's just how it works. And ease up on the effort for practical holiness.

Get used to the lag. Assume that it's always going to be there and therefore I shouldn't even try it. The word must here is telling us, no, no, no, no, no, no. You must not give up on your pursuit of practical holiness just because it's hard and just because you know it will never fully be there.

So on the one hand, be patient with the equipment you actually have, but also be expectant that God in his power and grace will help you to grow in holiness over time.

That's the idea here. The second thing I'd point out is something we've seen multiple times through the book of Ephesians, and that is just that the interior state is always the engine of outward conduct.

We're seeing this all over the book of Ephesians, that really what we need to focus on in order to change the exterior state is we need to focus on our heart. Consider how Paul prays those prayers in the first and second, third chapter.

[10:21] He does not pray, Lord, make them behave better. He has their behavior in mind, obviously, because now we're in chapter four and he's talking about it, but what does he do first?

What's the foundation that he lays? He prays that God would transform their hearts. The entire premise of change, the fundamental philosophy as you're thinking about transformation, is that if you want to change the outside, work on the inside.

It's the most important issue of all. Now, you know, I just remember one of the ways I fell in love with my wife, it just came to mind just now. She was a very marginalized kid in all sorts of ways.

Not well looked after in all sorts of ways. And not well cared for in all sorts of ways. All throughout her childhood. And the Lord saved her through probably like a vacation Bible school or something. Some kind of a children's ministry thing when, you know, her parent, her mom didn't want anything to do with her at that moment or whatever, and she went to a Bible school and came to faith in Jesus.

[11:31] So my wife has had a very interesting internal life with God for a very long time, in part because that's the only life that she really had access to. The Lord has been a faithful father and companion to my wife for many years.

And you know, there are seasons, especially in a girl's life, where you look in the mirror and you don't look like what you see, you're awkward, your nose is too big, your ears are too long, whatever, and everybody goes through this, especially when you're 13 or something like that.

And she told me, I think on one of our very first walks when we were both freshmen in Hannibal, Missouri, going to college, she told me, you know, obviously I thought she was extraordinarily beautiful and assumed, I think, that she always had been.

In fact, I wasn't actually interested in her to begin with because I thought no one that cute can be smart or interesting. But we're walking along and my heart kind of melts when I hear her say, you know, at some point when I was a teenager, I really felt very insecure with how I looked.

And I saw her photos from then and there was some, some reason for that. She was a pretty awkward kid. And she said, you know, God helped me to see that I, I read that thing in Peter.

[12:46] She didn't know where it was. You know, I read that thing in Peter. The beauty of the Lord is, you know, talking about inner beauty. She's like, I read that and I just started asking God, would you give me a beautiful heart?

Would you make my soul beautiful? It's like, I can't do anything about this. This is just gonna, the cement's gonna set the way the cement's gonna set, you know? Which, gosh, she kind of lucked out.

But, but at the time it wasn't like that and her whole focus was, God, would you just give me a heart that is beautiful? And that was kind of the moment, I remember I went home that night and I called my mom and I said, just so you know, I just went out with this girl, very first time, I'm gonna marry her, I'm gonna marry her soon and I'm gonna take care of her like she's never been taken care of before.

It was instant. I knew instantly. It's like, this person has pursued substance from the inside out and whatever I'm seeing on the outside is just an overflow of what was happening on the inside.

And, you know, I think that was probably easier to do back before Instagram and all that, by the way, ladies. Just, just saying. Anyway, so, this idea is all over Ephesians.

[13:59] It's always inside then outside. And, you know, we can get a certain level of acceptance and acclaim from the world if we just focus on the outside, but at some point you will realize that's not enough.

It never was enough. And you'll have to start working on the inside and that's really all that Ephesians is doing in terms of transformation is that what happens internally overflows externally. And in this particular section of Scripture we're given kind of a negative version of that which I think is important to notice. Look at verses 25 through 31. 25 through 31.

Paul wants the Ephesians to put off certain things and put on certain things. Falsehood is to give way to truth-telling. Theft is to give way to honest labor and generosity. Corrupt speech is to give way to words that build up and communicate grace.

Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice are to give way to kindness and tenderheartedness and forgiveness. But I want you to notice like I picked this particular section on purpose.

[15:02] Paul does not start with the list of behaviors. He starts with a list of internal conditions that are common to the lost. He begins in verses 17 through 24 with an internal condition list.

He's saying these are the things going on in the Gentiles that produces the behaviors that are downstream of it. He says that in the interior of the Gentile, which is here just another way of talking about a person who hasn't been born again, he says that they have a futility of mind, that thinking produces nothing of lasting value, that the engine of their mind is running but there's nothing happening, there's no grip on the road.

They're darkened in their understanding. They're alienated from the life of God. They're ignorant and rooted in hardness of heart. They have a conscience past feeling and calloused and they've surrendered themselves to sensuality.

And finally, he says that they're greedy for every kind of impurity, insatiable because of the appetite that grows every time they feed it. The appetite for sensuality grows, which is a well-understood problem.

And so what Paul's doing here is he's saying this is the operating system of the unregenerate man. The internals are affecting the externals. The internals are driving.

[16:22] The externals. And you know, most people, to be honest, to be fair, and I'm not any different, we sought God initially because something externally was broken. And it takes the gospel call to help us to see that whatever we were looking at out here, whether it was our marriage or we couldn't stay off the internet looking at bad stuff or we had some other kind of addiction, whatever it was that we were externally trying to fix, we had to come to terms with God's basic math and that is whatever it is out here you're trying to resolve has to be resolved from the inside out.

And you know, it's just very easy. I could sell, I could build a church tomorrow, especially with this beautiful sanctuary, I could build a church tomorrow by selling 10 quick tips for making better communication in your marriage.

People are dying for the superficial and the external. But true lasting change starts from within. And so Paul, before he gives a list of behaviors to pursue, he says, we have to remind ourselves yet again as he's done already numerous times that whatever we're trying to see happen on the outside in our behaviors starts with who we are on the inside.

This is something that Dove mentioned two weeks ago in one of his sermons. I finally had a chance to listen to those that was marching throughout the Atlanta airport. Well done. He talked about the

indicative and the imperative, which maybe you know what that means.

Maybe you're like, I don't, what does that mean? It just means that when the Bible tells you to do something, it always gives you a reason first. And that reason is almost usually rooted in something like this is who God is or this is who you are or something like that.

[18:05] And you can see that in Ephesians, but also pretty much all the New Testament books. Most New Testament books have a section that usually is referred to as ethics. And it's usually just a section where you're told like this is how a Christian should act.

But the first section is always like this is what a Christian is. So the indicatives, the things that are true about you, about God, always precede the imperatives, the thing you're supposed to do.

Now, I can tell you like this is kind of a cool hack because you could look at any New Testament book and go to the ethics section, which is usually the second half of any New Testament letter, and you can see immediately that all of the whys for the whats, all of the reasons you should act x, y, and z way are rooted in two basic identity things.

Let me say it this way simpler. When the Bible tells you something to do, it is always rooted in an identity claim. This is who you are or this is whose you are.

Those are the two reasons for anything the Bible tells you to do. This is who you are or this is whose you are. This is who you belong to. This is whose you are.

[19:14] And so you could go to just any New Testament book and find the section where there's a list like we're seeing here of behaviors and it's always going to be tied back to either this is who you are or this is whose you are.

Sometimes this appears negatively and sometimes it appears positively. Like in our text here, it's negatively. Paul's like, you're not Gentiles.

You're Christian. Therefore, don't act like Gentiles. Act like Christians. Sometimes it's just positive.

For instance, in 2 Corinthians, Paul tells the Corinthians that they are a new creation in Christ.

That's who you are. And then after saying this is who you are, he says, therefore, become an ambassador sharing the gospel with your neighbors because you're a new creation in Christ.

In Colossians 3, verses 3 and 5, Paul says, you have died and hidden your life with Christ in God.

And then after saying that, he says, therefore, put to death what is earthly in you.

[20:13] It's not just the Paul thing. Peter says the same thing in his first letter in chapter 2, from verses 9 to 11, he says, this is who you are. You're a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession.

And from that identity comes the appeal. I urge you, therefore, as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh. In Galatians, he basically compresses the whole thing into Galatians 2.20, which is one of the first verses I ever memorized.

I've been crucified with Christ. It's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me. And the idea is simple.

Who am I? I've been crucified with Christ. Therefore, the life I now live looks like X, Y, and Z. You're going to see this all over the New Testament. And I have countless examples. I feel like I overwrote a bunch of examples.

I'm just going to skip through a lot of them. The point is, is that even in the Gospels, it's always, this is who you are and this is whose you are. Therefore, behave in this particular way. Now, you might think, you might think that the solution, and I've seen this applied in plenty of devotional literature, is that when you are tempted to sin, when you're having trouble breaking a particular pattern or habit, or you're trying to grow in calmness and grow out of anxiousness, whatever, you might think that everything I've just said leads to this, that you need to spend time thinking about who you are in Christ.

[21:46] And I just tell you, that's actually not correct. And I'll help you to see that in a moment. But I can see how someone would say, Chris, you're saying that identity is the beginning of momentum of change, and so I just need to think more about who I am in Christ.

Like, well, that's not quite right. It's close, but we'll land on the practical in a moment and talk about that. One more thing to notice kind of broadly in this passage is that this is the second time the whole Trinity appears in a short section.

So back in chapter 1, we observed that salvation was accomplished through the work of the Trinity. We saw that the Father elects, and that's in verses 4 through 6 of chapter 1.

And then we saw that the Son redeems, and that's in verses 7 through 12. And then we saw that the Spirit seals, and that's in verses 13 through 14. And at the close of each one of those movements, in Ephesians 1, it always says, to the praise of His glorious grace.

The Father saves you to the praise of His glorious grace. The Son saves you to the praise of His glorious grace. The Spirit seals you to the praise of His glorious grace. So we noticed that when we were way back in chapter 1, that the Trinity appears right there for us, right there as the co-conspirators of our salvation.

[23:04] makes teamwork to make the dream work, all three members of the Trinity working together to save us, to seek and save us. Now what we see here in this section is that that's also true of sanctifying us.

So not only does the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit work together to save us, but the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit also work together to sanctify us. In verse 20, we see the Son.

That is not the way you learned Christ. In verse 24, we see the Father put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. And in verse 30, we see the Holy Spirit.

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. So, in chapter 1, we see that our salvation is rooted in the triune God, and in chapter 4, we see that our sanctification, our growth in holiness, is likewise rooted in the triune God.

But, a new person appears on the team in chapter 4 that was not explicitly on the team in chapter 1.

[24:14] This is interesting. And that new person on the team is you. A new person on the sanctification team appears.

That's you. You weren't on the salvation team. Ephesians 2 says that you were dead in your sins and trespasses. And you were almost like a zombie in that you were following, totally without any kind of awareness, the dark trinity of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

But then, something happens in chapter 2, verse 10. We're starting to hear language that tells us that we have a responsibility to work out our own salvation in fear and trembling.

to partner with God in our sanctification. In theology terms, this is called monergism. God alone works to save us. Synergism.

We are presented in scriptures as working with God as he sanctifies us. Now, these are just the ways that we express how it feels. God is in all of it, and only God is in all of it, fundamentally.

[25:21] But classically, in theology, we always want to let believers know that God saved you when you were dead in your sins and trespasses, and that completely, really without anything you were doing. You didn't have much to say about that.

You couldn't do much about that. But now, you're in a new situation where you are supposed to be on the same team with God, participating, cooperating with him as he sanctifies you.

You can see this transition take place, and I just want to double down on this because if you're trying to change, you need to understand a lot of this is just going to feel like work.

A lot of this is just going to feel like work. In your salvation, there was only, there was no freedom. There was no freedom. But now, in sanctification, there is.

We can see that in chapter 4, still open your Bibles if you've closed them, chapter 4, verse 20.

Watch what Paul says here. That is not the way you learned Christ, assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him as the truth is in Jesus.

[26:30] To put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, to put on the new self created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

All right, I need you to grab with me. We're not going to go much deeper than this, so let's make sure we put all of our brain power on this particular issue. Prior to your conversion, you had one self, and it was bound to be a slave to the world, the flesh, and the devil.

But after your conversion, we just saw in this passage we just read in verses 20 through 24, you now have two selves. That's what that passage just said.

And with two selves comes a choice. Before you had no choice but to walk in death. Now you have a choice. You can either walk in the flesh or the spirit, or as Paul describes it here, in the old self or the new self.

That's what I mean when I say that a new member of the team has appeared in the sanctification project that wasn't there in the salvation project. Theologian D.A. Carson just nails this when he's talking about another passage, a similar passage in 2 Peter, and he says it this way.

[27:55] Because God has given us everything we need for life and godliness, including a new nature that enables us to escape the corruption in this world caused by evil desires, for this reason, 2 Peter says, Therefore make every effort to add to your faith goodness and to goodness, knowledge, and so forth.

In other words, Carson says, precisely because God has given us his promises and because his power does work in us, therefore we have to work at it.

The Bible simply does not encourage quietism, which let go and let God. It just doesn't, he writes. There is a sense in which you may say that sort of thing in order to emphasize that it is God who is doing the work in you, but it is far more common to read in Scripture that because God is doing the work in you, therefore work your little head off.

Trembling, because God has done his bit and now it's up to you. Nor does it say, don't work at it, just trust God and let go and he'll take over and give you everything.

It says, work out your own salvation because it is God working in you both to will and to do his good pleasure. So the most fundamental thing you need to know about transformation is that when it's happening, it's going to feel like work.

[29:18] You're going to be conscious of effort being expended to grow in holiness. You can't simply wait for some Amazon Prime delivery of triumphant grace, unpack it, and like, well now I don't want to look at that anymore, or now I don't lose my temper anymore, or now I'm, no, that's just not how change happens.

Change happens through a very conscious effort of transformation. Now, let's close with just three kind of applications that appear to us in Ephesians and then we'll really dwell on this next week.

We'll be very practical next week. So far we've said that sanctification is just like identity lag.

Unfortunately, we still have lots of work to do to adjust to our new nature.

It's just understandable, and by the way, if you're kind of a new Christian and you look at other people who are more advanced than you in holiness, you need to understand that if they really are advanced in holiness, they're really not judging you, they're probably not even thinking about you, and when you bring up your struggle, they're like, oh yeah, I remember that too.

We all go through the same thing, you do not need to fear being behind. We're all just starting the race at different times, we're all going to be together forever and eternity, don't worry about it.

[30:39] We've got to grow, we all have lag between what God has made us to be and how we actually act, and we need to get to work at it. But the big thing to remember is that the interior always drives the exterior, and we see that in all sorts of different ways in the book of Ephesians, and that when it comes to changing the interior, we actually do have things we can do.

Now, what are those things? Well, first of all, I would say that the number one thing you and I should do is to behold Christ. The Christian life is fundamentally an imitation of Jesus Christ.

It's not a secondary feature or something you should do in addition to something else. The main thing you should do is study Christ and imitate Him. That's what Paul means when he talks about learning Christ or being imitators of God or walking in love.

This pattern is consistent in the Scripture. The number one job a Christian has is to pay attention to Jesus and try to act like Jesus. The number one job we have is to imitate.

You know, I had my mind blown the other day and it was kind of unsettling, but only because I'm dumb. I was in the Philippines and I was sitting in this garden eating some food I think, if I remember right.

[32:02] No, I was reading my Bible. Yeah, that's what it was. I was reading my Bible and I saw there's a whole cage of parrots, like large parrots, because they're from there.

And all our parrots are immigrant parrots, but those parrots were naturalized parrots. Anyway, so I'm sitting there and I'm thinking, oh, I wonder if they can talk. And then they start to talk, but they start to talk in Tagalog and not English.

And I've only ever heard a parrot talk in English and I kind of think in my head I only thought parrots did speak in English. So I had this kind of moment where I'm like, what is going on here? Like, how did that parrot learn Tagalog?

Well, because, anyway. Anyway. Just a very confusing moment for a second. All that to say that, of course, what a parrot does is it just listens to those that speak around it and it learns to speak like, and really fundamentally, that's why I said before, you would think that the goal of transformation is to just think, I am in Christ, I am in Christ, I am in Christ.

No. Actually, the goal of transformation is just to behold Christ. It's just to look at him, study him, pay attention to him, love him, just look at Jesus a lot.

[33:13] And so most fundamentally, like, the number one thing the Bible would have you to do to change your interior is to look at Jesus Christ. The Bible says that it's when we behold his face, behold the glory he has for us, we are transformed from one degree of glory to another.

That's 2 Corinthians 4, I encourage you to look at that if you're not sure what I'm talking about because the pattern is right there. If you want to know how to change, it's really just looking at Jesus. And this means when people tell you you should read your Bible more, what are they actually telling you to do?

Are they telling you to learn wisdom? Are they telling you this or that? What they're really trying to tell you, if they're, you know, wise pastoral types, is we just want you to see God more often than you see him now.

We just want you to look at God more often than you normally look at him because that beholding will be the transforming and we'll hit that more next week. But, you know, I learned this on the motorcycle.

People always tell you about this and I just didn't totally get it until I was going through a turn. You know, the instructors and people that tell you how to ride a bike, they, you know, all these friends had motorcycles and they're like, just whatever you do when you're in a turn, don't look at the guardrail because if you look at the guardrail, you're going to hit the guardrail.

[34:35] On a motorcycle, you go immediately to where your eyes go. And so I, of course, forgot that for a second and I'm on a pretty sharp curb and I was going pretty fast and I look at the guardrail and I came really close to biting it.

This is exactly what it's like to be a human being. That's why it doesn't work to look at yourself and say, I am in Christ, I am in Christ, I am in Christ. It's just not how a human works.

Look at Christ. Read about him. Study him. Listen to music that praises him. Fill your mind with images of God and you will become more like him.

Number two is prayer. As you've seen, Paul already show us, in addition to constantly beholding God's glory, we should be praying and asking God to transform our hearts.

There's parts of us we can't get to that only God can get to. Only he can play that game of operation and pull out the wishbone successfully. And we should be asking the Lord, please, Lord, I read today, please put this where it needs to go.

[35:37] Please put this in my heart. And finally, and this will be the main topic for next week, we have to start making structural changes that the Bible doesn't tell us to do. You say, well, my goodness, Chris.

What is this about? Doing things the Bible doesn't tell us to do. We'll get into it more, but look at this verse, verse 28, chapter 4. I think a lot of people are struggling to change because they don't understand this one thing.

It says, let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

We're getting a little bit of a lesson here on how change happens right here. Paul is telling this thief not to do the thing he's doing. He's telling him to do something else instead.

Stop stealing, go get a job so you can work with your hands and care for others. Shift out of a life of taking into a life of giving.

[36:38] You get all that stuff, right? But what Paul does not do is explain how to find employment. He says nothing about how to write a letter of introduction, how to acquire a trade, how to approach a potential employer, or manage his wages once they start coming in.

He simply says work so that you can give. And the thing is, if the thief doesn't figure out how to apply for a job and how to manage his money, he can't obey Paul.

And so what we'll see a lot, I don't think people understand, is that a lot of Scripture is telling you what to do and then leaving it up to you as a son or daughter of the Lord to go figure out how to make that happen.

And really, behind every habit that you're trying to undo or a habit that you're trying to gain, there's structure underneath. And that structure is not usually in the Bible. That structure is actually usually found in your brothers and sisters who can help you figure it out.

One of the real needs in our church, in the church, is for people who are desiring change to, of course, spend time in the Word and ask the Lord to transform their hearts.

[37:53] But also, go find someone that can help you think through the systems that need to be built in order for you to obey God. So much of our personal struggles are just for a lack of systems.

The thing to understand is that God leaves all of that to us because each one of us has a different path to obedience, to overcoming this habit, to securing this new and better approach and so forth. And so you need, God's given you the body of Christ to help you figure out that structural layer. So that's what we're going to talk about next week. Figuring out that if I really want to grow in any area of my life, I've got to reevaluate not just what I'm being called to do, but how I plan to get there.

The short-term lesson of that is sometimes called, or the summary of that is sometimes called spiritual disciplines, but it's really much broader than spiritual disciplines. It's really, I think it would say this way, properly ordering your life so that it leads structurally to holiness.

Properly ordering your life. Figuring out what you need to do at the structural level to accomplish what God's calling you to do, both internally and externally. So I think for application today, just say, boy, we really want to spend time beholding the Lord.

[39:11] We really want to pray and we really want to start thinking, what do I need to do differently, functionally in my life to see a different outcome? The only thing I can offer you right now is the beholding piece.

Why we do the Lord's Table every week is simply because we want to behold the greatest example of God's love that He's ever provided. God demonstrated His love for us and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

If you're here and maybe you came to church today because something externally has broken in your life, I'll tell you where to start and it's simple. God wants to save you and transform you. He wants to forgive all of your sins.

God is actually far more interested in forgiving you than you are in being forgiven and the cross proves that very thing. Look what He did to save you. Look what He did to start you down the road of holiness.

So if you're here and you don't know Jesus, if you haven't given your life to Jesus, you're resistant to that, oh my goodness, nothing's going to be different until He gives you a new heart. If you're here today and you are looking back at that moment that the Lord did that in your past, praise Him.

[40:23] We do this table every week because we're called to remember how God has demonstrated His love for us. So let me pray for us. You come and get the elements and then return to your seat and we'll partake together.

Father God, we thank You for Your Word. We pray, God, that over the next two weeks You would transform not just our lives, but just, Lord, help us to be clear about the tools You've provided us to see transformation not only in our own lives but to help others in their journey to holiness.

we praise Your great name that all of this working and trying to grow is not to affect our salvation. You have offered that to us freely through Christ, not of any works lest any man should boast.

We praise Your name that one of the things You do in our hearts when You save us is You make us want to be holy. And many of us do want to be holy, Lord. We need Your help to learn how to do that.

Today, let us just end this with a relief, a celebration saying, Jesus Christ has made the way for all of this because He, in the form of God, did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped, but humbled Himself all the way to the death on a cross so that He could be our Savior and He could be our Lord.

[41:40] Lord, bless this time of communion. In His name we pray. Amen.
Amen.