

The Freedom of Growth in Christ: Walking With Jesus to Win Against Sin

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[0 : 00] As we continue to look at what it is to walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me pray and make a few comments after that before we start into our lesson.

Let's pray together. Dear Father and Almighty God, You are so merciful, kind, and gracious. You are full of loving kindness toward us as Your people.

Lord, we love You and we thank You. Thank You so much, Father, for condescending to us and being so patient with us, so patient.

For bearing with us, Lord, especially when we're struggling with sin. Whatever it may be, whether it's greed or pride or some act of sin that we continue to fall into.

My prayer is that as Your people, Lord, You will help us to come alongside of each other and battle together against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

[1 : 05] Please, Lord, help us to have a one-another attitude from the deep part of our hearts about being a family, a church family. Knowing that we are closer together than many people experience in their organic families, their families of origin.

And it's due to what we share in Jesus. The hope and the peace and the love, the forgiveness that we have in Him. We treasure Jesus. He is our treasure.

We thank You for His cross and His gospel. The good news of His substitutionary death. God bless you, Lord, and His love. On our behalf, that we could know You. That we could be forgiven for our sins by You.

Made holy by You. And brought near to You, Lord, in His blood. Thank You for the truth that we will share together in tonight as we live in the freedom that You've purchased for us.

And we thank You, God, for the opportunities we have to have our hearts filled with this truth that we might live in practical holiness each day of our lives, being conformed to the image and character of our Savior.

[2 : 14] In all of these ways, we offer You the glory, the honor, and the praise in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Suzanne, would you mind getting me a deal?

Thank you, hon. All right. All right. Now, you guys will remember that originally, I crafted these lessons for a nine-lesson series that I did in Poland under their request and guidance of the theme that had to do with growth in Christ.

That's what they told me. Jeff, thank you, hon. Jeff, we want you to teach on growth in Christ. And they left the door wide open beyond that. And so, as I prayed and studied and thought, I narrowed the lessons in theme to what that growth looks like as we walk with Jesus.

That growing spiritually, like people grow, you know, you come out of the womb and you grow. Humans grow. You have to grow. If you don't grow, you die.

That's the only reason you don't grow as a human being. There's some disease or some issue that takes your life. Well, in the Christian life, you become a Christian, you grow. Now, that growth may be shallow and slow.

[3 : 34] It may be spits and spurts. It may be fast and it may be deep at times. But grow you must as a Christian. That's just part of what God promises.

So, as I developed these lessons for Poland, I had to keep in mind the translation issue as we went through. And I tried to think about concepts that might be a little difficult.

And so, I learned a lot of good lessons about how language and cultures are hearing and receiving God's truth in different ways.

But, the power of the Holy Spirit makes that truth, truth to them. It makes the truth truthful to them.

No matter what language, no matter what cultural differences or society they live in, the truth that you live by in the power of the Spirit, that's the same truth they live by in the power of the Spirit. [4 : 34] But sometimes, the way it's communicated through language is very different. And it's challenging. I'm saying all that to say, when I originally wrote this, I couldn't take as much liberty as I do with you in saying some of the things I say in the ways that I say them.

So, in many ways, I think, you're getting a fuller view of what I want to put across here. And you see, I'm not having to stop literally in half a sentence and then let it... and then regain my thought and finish that sentence. That is hard. Here, I can just keep going and when stuff comes into my head, I can walk over here and boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, and then come back, you know, that kind of thing.

So, this is what we're trying to do with this material. We have this lesson and we have one more. Can you believe? We've come that quickly through all of those. So, tonight and one more evening before we'll be finished up.

Tonight, we're dealing with the freedom of growth in Christ. Alright? So, pop quiz. What were the other two F's that served as the main categories that I taught from?

[5 : 47] The first three lessons were under one F. Then I did a number of lessons under another F. And now I'll do the final two under freedom. What were the other two? Fellowship was just before this one.

And what was before fellowship? Remember, I came over here. Ah, Josiah. Foundation, brother. That's right. Foundation. And the foundation is what we follow on.

We can follow Christ because He's given us a foundation in Himself. We've been saved. We've been made new creatures in Christ. So, we can follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I want to talk to you about freedom. The freedom of growth in Christ. What do I mean by that? Here's what I mean. Walking with Jesus to win against sin.

Before Jesus laid the foundation of your salvation, you had no hope against sin. You had no spiritual ability to win against sin in your life.

[6 : 55] You didn't even want to. At best, you were like me. You just didn't want to get caught. You didn't want to suffer the consequences. But once God saved you, now there's a whole new spiritual dimension and dynamic to your life where you're able to fight against sin and say no to sin, whereas before you couldn't do those things.

Is it with me? You see where I'm going here with this? Does that seem evident to you? Alright? So, Christ saving you gave you the ability to not want to sin as well as say no to sin.

To fight against it. Without salvation, you don't want any of that. You don't want, you don't desire any of that. This is a game changer, isn't it? Because it's a life changer.

Jesus is the life changer. So, this is what I'm talking about when I say to you that we're going to deal with freedom of growth. You have been freed by Jesus to grow in Jesus.

The only way you can do that to experience freedom is you've got to be deslaved from sin. Because the Bible tells us we were all enslaved to sin.

[8 : 10] Right? Alright, this is what the freedom is all about in the Lord Jesus. So that we can walk with Him and win against sin. Now, we also lose battles with sin.

I understand that. But that doesn't characterize who we are in the Lord. It should look very different from constantly losing that battle because we have the power of the Spirit.

Alright, now, guys, for a few of you who are at the men's conference, you're going to get kind of a double dose of tonight.

This is the lesson. This is what I prepared all those months ago. And it just happens to be in Colossians. So, Colossians 3.

It's a passage that I visit often. And in the first half of the chapter, chapter 3, Paul is applying the doctrine of Christ's supremacy to our fight against sin.

[9 : 12] Now, let me say that again. We're talking about the supremacy of Jesus over sin. And so, that has ramifications for you as His follower because He lives in you.

His supremacy over sin becomes your victory over sin. But now, what you need to be thinking right as I say that is this. Yeah?

How? How? How is His victory my victory over sin? Especially in the sin that I fight each day.

And you know, it could be as simple as this. It could be as straightforward as a sin like this because typically when I say sin like that, well, I'm not committing adultery. I'm not cheating on my taxes.

I'm not cussing people out. Those are the things I used to do before the Lord. No. I'm talking about sin as simple as this. Apathy.

[10:12] Just being apathetic about the things of God. Laziness is sin. Worry is sin.

Manipulation. Manipulation. Control. Those are sins. So it can be that kind of stuff. And it manifests in different activities in our life.

Let's look at Colossians 3. 1 through 11. Now guys, again, apologies that we're going to hit some of this like Terry did, but I didn't know where Terry was going to be.

So it's all good, right? It all comes together. I'm reading from the New American Standard and it says, therefore, or it should read since. Since you have been raised up with Jesus.

Now there's your salvation. Keep seeking the things above. There's your contribution to that reality. God has raised you up with Christ in salvation.

[11:14] Now what do you need to do in response? You need to keep pursuing, keep seeking the heavenly things. Where Christ is.

It's a way of saying the priorities of your life need to align with heavenly priorities. Seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on.

Set the priorities of your heart on. Aim your thinking at the things above. That is, He's calling you in verse 2 to be heavenly minded about life.

Now stop there and ask you, are you heavenly minded about your life? Are you heavenly minded about who you are and how you live and what you prioritize?

What's important to you? What's valuable to you? Are you heavenly minded about how you go about your relationships? At whatever age you are in life from Lucy's age up to my age.

[12:18] I'm probably, am I the oldest person in the room? Oh my goodness, Suzanne, I'm the oldest. Okay. Sorry, Alonzo. I'm not throwing Alonzo under the bus. I really thought I was the oldest one.

So we're close though. We're very close. Alright. Alright, we're close. Mike's right behind me. Okay. Alright, so set your mind on.

Be heavenly minded. Not, not. Here's what works against heavenly minded. Not on the things that are on earth. Don't be consumed with. Don't let yourself be pulled away and distracted by.

Earthly matters that tend to consume the way you think about life. Here's your worriers. Here's the people that struggle with anxiety.

Here are the folks that get tangled up in the things that draw them away from making Jesus the issue in everything. Here's your prescription.

[13:19] Why? Why do these things? For you have died and your life, your new identity is hidden with Christ in God.

That's another way of saying God has you wrapped up in this new identity and sealed, and sealed, guaranteed, and protected in what He has made you.

You are cocooned in that identity that He has done for you. That's you being hidden in Christ. Not hidden from the world.

You have been cocooned in this reality, this new spiritual identity. so much so in verse 4 when Christ who is our life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

You're so tied to the Lord. You're so unioned. That's the theological concept. You are so spiritually unioned to Jesus that there's no beginning and end to you that isn't the beginning and end of Him.

[14:23] You can't separate it out. I can't look at the Lord in terms of what you've been unioned with Him in and say, there's Jesus and there's Solomon.

There's Jesus and there's Brenda. No. There's Jesus and Brenda and Jesus and there's Brenda and Jesus and that's how God sees this.

Aren't you following me in this? Alright? That's the union that you have with Christ. Very important. Therefore, since these realities about you are truths about you, therefore, consider the members of your earthly body hands, feet, eyes, etc.

as dead to these things immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed which amounts to idolatry.

for it is because of these things that the holy wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience. Sons of disobedience is a way of talking about unbelievers, people who live by that course, the greed, the impurity, etc.

[15 : 38] And in them you also once walked when you were living in them. You lived according to your desires at one time and those desires had nothing to do with the Lord.

But now, but now, verse 8, you also put all of these aside. Anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive speech from your mouth, those are all evidences of a perverted love of self.

It's a perverted love because it's a love of self that manifests all of that. You have this perverted love of self and you want to love yourself in a way that puts you above and over other people.

That's what anger and wrath and malice and slander and abusive speech are. Those are all relational sins toward other people. Whether you harbor them in your heart or whatever. Now he comes out with something that would be more overt.

Verse 9, so out of all of that, don't lie to each other because that's where all of that stuff in verse 8 leads to. It leads you to live a hypocritical double-minded two-faced life.

[16 : 56] Do you not know this? Have you seen this practically? All of us should be going that sure was me for sure.

Yeah. No, he says no. Put them all aside and don't lie. Don't live two-faced. Don't live double-minded. Don't live hypocritically since you laid aside that old self.

That was your old life. with its evil practices all stemming from your own evil heart. But now, verse 10, you've put on the new self who's being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the one who created him.

That's salvation. Your new self is your new identity in the Lord Jesus. And he says in verse 11, he fleshes it out. This is a renewal. This is a spiritual renewal in which there is no distinction between a Greek Christian and a Jewish Christian, between a circumcised Christian and an uncircumcised Christian, between a barbarian, a Scythian, a slave, or a free man, but Christ is all and in all.

If you're in Christ, none of those distinctions matter. Because now you've been made part of the family of God. It doesn't matter if your skin's black, if your skin's white, if your skin's purple, it doesn't matter.

[18 : 11] If you're in Christ, Christ is in and Christ is all. You're all brought together in a common bond in the Lord Jesus because all of us were saved from these same things.

And now we've been called to live this life. Alright, now, I want to clarify an important truth about something this passage zeros in on because it's created no small issue in some of the writings that we've come across and some of the teachings from different pulpits.

I want to clarify it. It concerns spiritual growth as we fight against sin. Now, some of you have heard me teach on this before and emphasize this. Here it is.

Only Christ can kill sin. So, only Jesus can defeat sin. You have no personal power in and of yourself, even as a Christian, to defeat sin.

As a Christian, your power to defeat sin has been given to you and resides in Jesus Christ. You with me on that?

[19 : 17] You had no power over sin before Jesus and the only power that you have now over sin in your life is because Jesus lives in you. He brings the power.

And so, immediately you see, boy, I need to learn how to tap that power. That's right. That's what this whole lesson is about. Only Christ can kill sin and defeat sin.

So, when Paul says, if you look back up in verse 5, therefore, consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, passion, evil desire, greed, which amounts to idolatry.

Verse 5, and some of your translations might read this way, can actually read, therefore, put to death. Whose reads that way? Alright, several of you are raising your hand.

What translation is that? ESV? Okay, the ESV says put to death. That's a more literal and probably a more clear translation than consider your members to be dead to sin.

[20 : 18] Or, another word there would be reckon your members as dead to sin. But, the idea here is put to death. So, when Paul tells us to put to death the sin in Colossians 3.5, he means for us to deal with remaining sin in our lives by putting to death, hear it carefully, the ungodly desires that fuel sinful behavior.

Every act of sin that you do begins in your heart as a wrong desire. Even the attitudes of sin that you hold in your heart or that you rehearse in the imagination of your mind, those sins cannot be disconnected from a desire that you have.

And that desire can be a good desire being used or followed up on in an inordinate way, an illegitimate way.

it can be a good thing that has gone to a bad place in your life. Now, I need to see hands. When I just said that, did that register some confusion?

It's okay to raise your hand. A little bit, Michael. Okay. A little bit. I'm watching your eyes. You're a very you have no poker face. Kendall. Yes.

[21 : 45] So you you feed me. I watch you. You are so helpful. She has an honest face. Whatever is that's happening. So, all right.

So what I just talked about was you can have a good desire. It can be a desire that is not a bad desire in and of itself. Let's say that that desire is let's do a married couple.

That's easiest for me because I've been married for a while. Let's say in the marriage the wife has a desire for her husband to lead the family spiritually and to show a patient tender love to her.

All right. Now, is there anything wrong biblically with a wife desiring that in her husband? No? No. How many would agree with that answer?

Okay, good. I don't do trick questions. All right. So, yes, that's absolutely true. Nothing wrong with that desire. Can that desire go bad to the point where the wife sins in order to get that fulfilled?

[23 : 03] Now we got a problem. Nothing wrong with the desire in and of itself, but when I elevate that desire to the point where I'm to sin to try to get it or to sin if I don't get it, what's going on now?

Sin! It's not that hard, is it, Michelle? When you hear me say it like this. And so, this is what we find in marriages. Many times, what started out to be an expectation that maybe they read out of the Bible, you're supposed to be the spiritual leader.

That's true. And when that expectation isn't fulfilled, that can start working on you, the wife or whatever, to the degree where if you don't carefully check that expectation, what can start to happen?

Disappointment can morph into or change or grow into because this is what sin does. Sin never sits still. Sin is never stagnant. It doesn't just sit there and stagnate.

It's a cancer. It's a disease. It's active. It spreads. And so your disappointment for the lack of expectation being met with that good desire turns into anger.

[24 : 28] Anger takes you to bitterness. Bitterness takes you to resentment. Resentment leads you to further manipulate, control, criticize, complain, punish.

I'm willing to sin to get it. So I'll manipulate you, I'll control you, I'll criticize you, I'll shame you, I'll say things to you to try to get you to do what I want you to do.

That's I'm willing to sin to get it. I'm willing to sin if I don't get it. If you don't do these things, I'll punish you. I'll give you the silent treatment. I'll withhold intimacy.

But I'll find a way to manipulate. Now you see what I'm saying. Now you can put just about anything in that category. Anything that's even a good desire and it goes bad because you elevate it to the place of almost God like status in your life.

We call that an idol. That's an idol. Because you're expecting something or someone to do for you what only God can do. Only God can work through your husband to give you a husband like that.

[25 : 37] And no amount of criticizing, shaming, sinning, withholding, manipulating, or whatever is going to make him that man. You cannot make him that man. You can't do it.

Only God can do that. Well, when you accept that and you back up and then you deal with the last thing I'm going to tell you in this lesson if I can get to it, it will answer, well then what kind of wife should I be?

what should be my primary goal and role as a wife or as a husband given that reality you just laid out Jeff and how easy it is to slip into it when expectations are not being met.

And you know what? Suzanne and I will be married 42 years in December. This could happen to us in a heartbeat, can't it hun? In a heartbeat. We are not immune. Now, the years of walking with the Lord and getting to know each other and building spiritual discipline into our marriage makes us less vulnerable than we used to be, but we're not so naive to think that we have arrived at a place where this can't happen to us.

As long as your heart's beating and you're still married, this can happen to you. But now you don't have to be married for this to happen, do you Alonza? Dealing with people, relationships, dealing with my heart toward other people or even toward my past.

[27 : 03] This can happen in my heart about my past. Satan loves to put, boy, I just want to teach on all that so bad. I've got to move on. I can't keep letting you guys, you pull it.

I want so bad now to launch into talking about how Satan uses your past in that way because that is so tricky. No, no, I've got to move on. I've got to do this. I want to get this one done. You can remind me, let's do the past thing another time because that's a big one.

That's a big, big one that he uses in people's lives. All right. At the end of verse 5, I want you to notice this. At the end of verse 5, therefore, consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and, notice, greed, which amounts to idolatry.

Paul speaks of the greed of our hearts, the greed of our hearts, which amounts to idolatry. That's what I was just telling you.

Those things that we elevate to the status of expecting them to do for us what only God can do, those are idols. We're worshiping those things. It can be worshiping a desire, or worshiping an outcome, or worshiping a person, or worshiping a thing.

[28 : 19] Whatever it is that we've attached the expectation to that they're going to do for us what only God can do. It's an idol. Greed, like pride, is always, always behind our sinful behavior.

You cannot sin apart from pride and greed. They're always going to be in the background somewhere. In fact, this is just the point Paul's making about the progression of sin in your life. Remember I told you it's like a cancer. It doesn't just sit and stagnate. It's always aggressively looking for. Satan is like a prowling predator looking for someone to devour.

All right, now look, Paul's list moves from, and I want you to notice this, it moves from the outward behavior. So if you see this big circle as the outward showing demonstration manifestation of sin in your life, immorality is any kind of sexual sin.

He goes to that particular shade in this particular list, then he'll do other stuff later. But right now he's talking about some type of sin in your life that's tied to your sexuality.

[29 : 41] That's the general category of immorality. And then he moves the outward behavior of immorality referring to every kind of sexual sin.

He moves now down the list to the inward attitudes and desires of the heart. Do you see that on the screen? These inward attitudes of desire in your heart give birth to these outward actions of sin. But they start inward and work their way out. The mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart. Heart.

Luke 6 45. Okay? At the very center of this spiritual heart issue is the sin of, notice on the screen, greed.

Greed. One of the reasons I teach this is because this gives you such good biblical ammunition and insight into the operations of your heart and how Satan tries to tempt your heart toward some type of sinful behavior or some type of inner sinful harboring of something like unforgiveness or resentment or bitterness or this is what I was going to do with the past.

[31 : 02] Some issue of your past. He knows that's a dead-end street and so he wants to keep you there. Now this greed that we're talking about here reveals the ungodly desires we allow to rule us in an unholy pursuit of what God forbids.

There's your definition of greed. Greed is an unsatisfiable desire for what God forbids. That is the nature of greed.

It's never satisfied. You can never satisfy greed. That's what greed is. It's insatiable. So Satan keeps you in this greed mode.

He keeps you chasing and pursuing what you can never quench. And that's why it gets worse. That's why it's progressive. Alright, this is all right here.

Do you see this in the text with me? I need to know if you're following the text with me in this that I'm not making this up. I'm not reading between the white spaces here. Yeah, we good? Okay, because I'll go back and spend more time.

[32 : 12] Alright, now, the root of ungodly desire is what you're fighting against. So when Paul says put to death, he's talking about you putting to death these desires, these wrong attitudes, because you can't kill sin.

sin. So he's telling you to work on the desires that give birth to it, because you can do something about that. That's the difference.

If you don't learn to spiritually fight like this, you're going to continue to fail and struggle and get frustrated and more frustrated. all right? So, yeah, all right, let me keep going because I explained it a little bit here.

All right, we want to stop sinful behavior by cutting its root. So the sinful desires which give energy to the sinful deeds are the root that we're aiming at with the acts.

Paul says that sinful desire is an expression of self-worship. And God calls this idolatry. Idolatry isn't about bowing to statues and other images that we think of from the Old Testament.

[33 : 40] Idolatry happens in the heart and we can make an idol out of anything and anyone. All we do is we just replace God with them. Or it.

And this is self-worship. Idolatry is your heart foolishly looking to a God replacement. Something or someone to give you what only the true God can provide.

So again, and I'm saying this in several different ways, so forgive the repetition, but it's intentional.

Idolatry is an expression of our greedy heart seeking its own way in place of God and His ways.

The world, the flesh, and the devil all make sure that we are in this struggle against sin as long as we're on this earth. Your struggle against sin is not something that God invented for you and so that He tempts you.

The Bible tells us very clearly, God tempts no one to sin. He tests you, but He does not tempt you.

God is not in the business of playing games with people and their sin.

[34 : 55] It costs God His Son's life to save us from that. He's not going to play games with us about that. Okay? So, the question now in all of this, right at the bottom of the screen, what can you do about these desires, these desires that have gone sinful on you and their subsequent deeds?

I want to stress another truth about our spiritual growth in the Lord which is often, I think, overlooked in the teaching of winning the war against our sin. Alright, that's where I'm taking you. I'm answering this question by stressing another truth that's often overlooked and not often taught. And you've heard me say this before, I'm very fond of telling you this when I teach like this.

If God's Word isn't worked into your heart, you can't expect His Word to be worked out in your life.

Now, that truth operates within two parallel related spiritual experiences in your daily life with the Lord.

Alright, so that's what I'm going to do now. I'm going to unpack that reality, that spiritual reality, along two parallel tracks like railroad tracks for you to help make it a little more robust in your mind since we're talking about fighting sin.

[36 : 23] The first, the first experience, the first track I want to talk to you about recognizes God's activity of working His truth into your heart by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

If God didn't do that, there'd be no truth in your life. How many of you either heard sermons or read the Bible yourself before you got saved and it really didn't make any difference in your life at all?

How many had that experience? Okay, me too. Me too. I went to church, I sat under sermons, I read the Bible when I was asked to and stuff like that and it didn't stop me from sinning.

If God doesn't work His truth into your heart, you're not going to change. He has to make the truth experientially real to you by the ministry and power of the Holy Spirit.

Now, that's the first parallel reality in this growth. The second experience, it emphasizes your, you notice I underline God's in your, your activity of taking God's word into your heart as Jesus' follower, His learner, His disciple.

[37 : 43] And now, so you may say, all right, Jeff, now wait a minute, is it God working His word into my heart or is it me working God's word into my heart? Okay, that's right. Your growth in grace is a cooperative effort between you and the Lord.

So it's both. It's both. This concept of spiritual cooperation for your spiritual growth between you and the Holy Spirit is expressed theologically by a fancy S word that we've studied before.

Greg cannot answer. He knows. What, what is it? Sanctification is a great one. That is the broader headings. And you know what? My question actually did set you up to say that.

So let me try again. I did. I set her up. Okay, let me try a different way. Let me emphasize this cooperative effort between you and the Lord is expressed in one theological term that is the opposite of monergistic.

Thank you. Synergistic. Yes, now she's on. Now she's right on. So synergy, the bringing together of different elements into one push, one hole, one design.

[39 : 00] So synergy, yes. Our salvation is the foundation over here. Our salvation is monergistic. Moner, one, that means exclusively of the Lord.

The only thing we contributed to our salvation was our sin. On the other side over here, now that we've been saved by the grace and power of God through faith, even the faith is a gift that he gave

us to do that.

Now that we've been saved, we come over here and we say, all right, now as I grow in Christ likeness, God expects me to do things. I have to participate.

I have to be involved in that growth. I have to be a cooperative agent in this growth. or I'm going to find myself in spits and spurts and constantly being defeated in some type of sin in my life.

Okay? It's both. God uses our efforts to learn and to take in his words so that you can then work out that truth by applying it to your life's situations and circumstances.

[40 : 11] All right, let me give you two quick because we're right here. Flip back one book to Philippians and you know this verse. You've heard this before.

Philippians 2, verse 13 brings together these elements. Well, let me do verse 12.

So then, my beloved, just as you've always obeyed, obeyed, you notice obedience here, that's something you do, but you can't do it apart from Christ.

Not as in my presence only, but now you're obeying much more in my absence. And Paul's saying, that's great. I don't have to be there babysitting you, you're obeying the Lord. Now he says, work out your salvation.

You work out. You work out what he's working in. You work out and you do that with awe, fear, reverence, and trembling.

[41 : 15] Humility. It should humble you to know that the power of God in the universe, the God of the universe, is working in your life toward this very end.

Verse 13 adds the kicker, for it God who is at work in you. To do what? To make it to where you both will and work for his good pleasure.

Your willing and your working in the spiritual life cannot be disconnected from what God is working in you. So it's both and.

God is working in you that you might want and will and work to his good pleasure. It's synergistic. Isn't that cool?

Now that's encouraging to me. It really is. I think about that sometimes when I feel lonely or I'm feeling a particular darkness or oppression.

[42 : 17] You know, as Greg and I shepherd, now don't hear me whining here. This is a matter for prayer. You know, pastoring, we carry the weight like Paul said of the churches kind of thing.

You know, we care. Or we shouldn't shepherd. And so your pains become our pains. Your burdens become our burdens. We don't want anything to happen in our shepherding life here that is going to get in the way of you being made vulnerable to Satan and sin.

And so all that we do in our shepherding is about being proactive, not reactive, but proactive as much as possible against what we know to be, the wiles and schemes of the devil.

We're both experienced shepherds in the sense that it's not our first rodeo. So, you know, we know wolf tracks when we see them. Oh, that's a wolf. We got a wolf circling the sheep here.

You see what I'm saying? And so, you know, we get ready. We're loaded up. That kind of thing.

This is so comforting to me, especially in those times when we're feeling that weight.

[43 : 33] Well, no, no, no, no, listen. The Lord is working in. And so, even as a shepherd, feeling like I'm way out of my league, way in over my head and out of my depth, the Lord wouldn't call me to do this if He wasn't working in me what He wanted me to work out for the betterment of His people.

Boy, that helps me get up the next morning and say, all right, time to go to work. Let's keep going. And it can do that for you too. Okay.

Oh, let me give you one more. Let's go to Hebrews 13. Hebrews 13 verses 20 and 21 would be other examples here of what we just read in Philippians.

Now, the God of peace, 20 and 21, who brought up from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, do what?

Equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever.

[44 : 48] Amen. You see that? He is equipping you in every good thing to do His will. He's doing that. And He is working in us that which is pleasing in His sight.

That is an active promise and an active caring on God's part that never stops as long as you're on this planet and you belong to Him.

God is working in you what pleases Him so that you will do His will. And that happens at the level of your wants. Jesus is helping you want what He wants you to want.

Does that make sense? And you come over here as you want more and more of what Jesus wants for you, your life begins to live out of that desire for what Jesus desires for you.

We call that spiritual growth, conformity to Christ. Christ. He's teaching you to want what He wants for you. He doesn't want immorality for you.

[45 : 55] He doesn't want manipulation, control, idol worship. He doesn't want you to live in fear, worry, anxiety. No.

No. Another way to express this spiritual process is you living by the wisdom of the Lord. This is living in the wisdom of Christ about life.

Let me share a quote with you that I just came across and wrote it in my margin real quick. Listen, God equips believers to do His will by energizing them to will and work for what pleases Him.

your service then is the outgrowth of God's inner working. I should have made a slide, huh?

But it was too late. I came across it too late. God equips believers to do His will. We just read that in Hebrews.

[47 : 07] Okay, how? By energizing them to will and work for what pleases Him. Yes. Yes.

His desire to will and to work in what pleases Him. Not you, Him. But what He's working in you is more and more of a desire to please Him.

That happens as you go. You come to realize more and more that when I live like this and think like this and treat others like this, it pleases the Lord.

And as you please the Lord, you grow in being pleased. It pleases you to please Jesus. That becomes increasingly important to you. And that becomes the main motivation for not sinning.

It's not not getting caught. It's not not getting what you want. It's not suffering the consequences.

The main motivation is I know that won't please the Lord and I've come to my life to a place where I want to live and speak and do in ways that please him.

[48 : 12] It pleases me to please him. And I don't want to sin. That's integrity. Now you've got something that will work for you even in the shadows.

Even when nobody's looking. Why? Because you know God is. Alright? Then he makes this statement. Your service, then, your ministry, every one of you have a ministry, every one of you are ministers, your service is the outgrowth of God's inner working.

And that's what drives a church in godliness. That's what makes church fun. Church being the people, the gathering of the people, the one anothering of the people, of God's people.

That's what gives heart and soul to church life. It's when you have a bunch of people tripping all over themselves, trying to please Jesus by doing for one another.

Because you know it pleases Him for that to happen. When my people are loving each other and obeying my commandments by loving one another in that way, it pleases me greatly and I bless them.

[49 : 27] When you got a group of people, it doesn't matter the number, tripping all over themselves, trying to live a life like that together. You know, nobody's work you dogs.

Nobody's doing that. You're doing that because you love the Lord. You love the Lord. That's why you do it. You come here and you're consistent here because you love the Lord.

Because you know it pleases God for you to be here as a minister, as a servant. If you profess Jesus, you should be serving Jesus by serving His people.

You should be bowing to His word, serving His word. You are a servant of the truth. And you minister, you serve that truth to other people.

Isn't that great? What an enterprise. Do you see win-win all over that scenario? Amen! Let me tell you, they look in on that life going on and they do not get it, but they crave it.

[50 : 28] yes, they're jealous of it. They envy it. Oh, that I could be a part of a community like that where I had people care for me like that and care about me like that.

People willing to sacrifice what they have and who they are to see that I'm bettered in my life. Where do they find that? Anywhere out there.

No, everybody's got an agenda. everybody's got some kind of motive behind what they right. I do for you. I scratch your back. You scratch mine.

That's not the way it works in the Christian life. There ain't no scratchy scratchy. You please the Lord and that's it. And then it falls where it falls.

Look at some of these verses that I came up with. Oh, spiritual process is you living by the wisdom of the Lord. Yep, said that. Yes, here's the verse. Trust in the Lord.

[51 : 30] Now I want you to notice this. I'll come back to it. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding and all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your path straight.

Do not be wise in your own eyes. Fear the Lord and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones. Now I want you to notice in that you can't see it very well. So then we're probably going to have to start. Well, maybe you can on this one. Well, you can kind of. All right. You see all the underlines? So I can't see them.

Oh, I have them. Trust in notice what you're doing. This member I told you it's synergistic. This is you trust. Do not lean on acknowledge do not be wise in fear turn away from.

You see all that just in this little passage. This is you being spiritually active. Notice this next one.

[52 : 39] He who separates himself seeks his own desire. He quarrels against all sound wisdom. A fool does not delight in understanding but only in revealing his own mind. This is a person who's very proud, very haughty.

I can do it myself. Thank you very much. No, separates, seeks, quarrels against, does not delight in, reveals his own mind.

Not good. Look, pursuing selfish pleasure in any form isolates you from the truth. So, doing what is right in your own eyes, that's the way the Bible captures what we've been talking about.

Doing what's right in your own eyes is another way the Bible describes the pursuit of sinful desires. It's the opposite of what it means to fear the Lord.

You're either doing what's right in your own eyes or you're fearing the Lord. Those are antithetical realities, concepts to each other. One or the other.

[53 : 42] The fear of the Lord is to have a high and holy reverence, an awe, a deep respect and high admiration for God and for His truth. That's what it means to fear the Lord.

So if you're going to grow in likeness to Jesus, you need to grow your heart's affection and high esteem for Jesus and His Word. The fear of the Lord teaches you to hate your sin for what it is. It is death, it is decay, it is defilement of what God says is precious and life giving. Sin hates what is precious to God.

Sin hates what is life giving in Christ because sin is death producing. Deceitful desires are always self-centered and they always work against what God is working in.

So you have to learn to join the Lord in putting off or the Bible here in our passage says lay aside or kill the deceitful selfish prideful greedy desires of your old life.

[54 : 45] Question how do you do this? I keep just taking it until we draw a line and say there it is.

How do you do this? Answer you train yourself in working out what God is working in. You train your discipline yourself to work out what God is working in.

This is you humbly receiving. This is you humbly submitting in an active way. How do you do this?

It begins in what you think. The process of spiritual discipline for godly growth begins in your mind.

Your mind and desires work in concert so that your desires are at home in your mind.

This would be your heart so that what you think reflects what you believe and what you want. When I say think, I'm talking here about how you process life.

[55 : 53] This is how you reason. This is how you form perspectives on things. That involves your desires. It involves your convictions.

how you come to make meaning about things in life.

All right? So if we chart it, if we take this process I'm describing and chart it, the process looks like this. What you do reflects what you want.

And what you want reflects what you think. Or in reverse order, it looks like this. Think, desire, do. Think, desire, do.

You never do anything without a motive. Everything you speak and do has a motive behind it.

[56 : 57] Some desire, some expectation. You want something. It's just not that hard. The Bible doesn't make it hard. It's hard to live, but it's not hard to figure out.

The Bible shows us. We get people in and people are having problems and they're having troubles and they're struggling with sin and sin in their life and failing sin in their marriage whatever.

It comes down to me bringing people to the place where I help them see through the emotion through all of the turmoil and through all of the history of the past all of that just dumping on them

and weighing them down.

! me helping sort through all of that with some objectivity and getting to the place where we say now when this happens what do you want?

That's your heart. What do you want? I want my wife to I want my house to be I want my husband to and I want to sin to make him do it give it stop it or I want to sin if he doesn't now whose issue is that that's right the one doing the sinning you make me so mad nope nope that's psychology that's not Bible you may choose to respond in anger but I don't make you do anything you sin out of your own motive every one of us do don't let psychology and all the movies you've seen cloud your mind about what the Bible says is the operation of your heart or operations okay so the scriptures then make clear that the battle for spiritual growth

[59 : 07] Christ like is one or lost in your mind slash heart God's word renews and trains your mind to think Christ like you know this you are transformed by the renewing of your mind and what is true that's where the spiritual work happens not in your brain in your mind in your heart your soul your spirit spirit all of those terms are in one way or another synonymous with the core of who you are the central aspect of what makes your personhood what it is made in the image of God so you learn you see in that statement you learn to want what God wants for you when the scriptures speak of God giving you the desires of your heart oh beloved that does not mean that

God lets you have eat candy all the time your kids may want to make a diet of candy all the time! What kind of parent are you if you let that happen but that's the desire of their heart that's not what that verse means God gives you the desires of your heart as he trains your heart to want what he wants for you read the verse you'll see that's the kicker that's the qualifier as you learn to delight yourself in the Lord delight yourself in the Lord means I want to please him I'm delighted in him I want to please him so he'll give you the desires of your heart why because the greatest desire of your heart is to please him and so all those things are going to be commensurate with that great desire they're all going to be subservient to that great desire to please Jesus okay trying to trying to make this practical all right for

God to work his truth into your heart you have to pick up that truth and you have to take it into your heart as you read the Bible as you study the Bible project we do every year as you study the Bible as you memorize parts of the Bible verses that help you that guide you that encourage you that inspire you as you meditate on it as you drive down the road with that three by five card in that verse or or your phone playing that verse back to you or the Bible on tape!

or something someone said that's a teaching and you play it over and over and you rehearse it in your mind trying to let it get in and help program you in the truth that's your part in taking it in so you need to learn to feed yourself the truth you need to practice taking God at his word and then applying obeying trusting putting his word to work in what you!

say! and! His train aim and tame your desires in Christ likeness and that's what you want I promise you every one of us in this room have desires that are not Christ like they don't call them deceitful desires for nothing they're deceitful they masquerade they charade they hide they're counterfeit they're camouflaged to look like something you want and should pursue only to find you get bit by them all right look at this verse let the word of Christ richly dwell within you with all wisdom and teaching admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God that expresses it let the word of Christ richly dwell within you are you doing that do you have a spiritual plan for that don't be mystified why you don't have direction from

[63 : 24] God peace from God or whatever if you're not taking his word into your heart all 176 verses of psalm 119 reveal and rehearse the blessings the benefits and the requirements of God's word for his servants I can just give you a few real!

quickly here how can a young man keep his way pure by keeping it according to your word no surprise there your word I have treasured in my heart why that I might not sin against you wow that's wisdom isn't it I shall delight myself in your statutes I shall not forget your word deal bountifully with your servant that I may live and keep your word statutes would be those holy do's and don'ts of the Lord that keep us out of the ditches of sin they help us with wise living because they relate to the more legal ramifications of don't do this because the penalties for this are more than you want to pay do this instead because the blessings that come are so much better to live in right unfortunately in the midst of sin and want and me we don't think like that establish your word or your promise to your servant as that which produces what reverence for you what produces

reverence what produces the fear of the

Lord a high and holy reverence his word established in my heart now I want to give you real quickly here I want to give you real quickly three practical actions can somebody go back there and stop that clock three practical actions that you can take in your pursuit of being more like Jesus in terms of this freedom as you walk against sin you walk with Jesus so that you don't sin so in three successive verses here in our passage Paul puts these actions in the form of three commands three injunctions the first is in verse 15 and you've seen this with me so we're back in Colossians 3 verse 15 let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts now what exactly is this peace which Jesus gives to govern our hearts it's the peace of Colossians 1 13 and 14 where we have been!

transferred from the kingdom of darkness the domain of darkness enslavement to sin as Satan's slaves into the kingdom of God's beloved son Jesus Christ where we are forgiven for our sins and redeemed redemption means we've been freed from sin wow it's that we have peace knowing that it's Colossians chapter 2 beginning in verse 19 not holding fast to the head from the entire body being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments grows with a growth which is from God if you've died with Christ to the principles of the world as if you were living in them don't submit yourself to those desires anymore!

self made religion! self abasement and severe treatment of the body but at the end they have no value against fleshly indulgence! Stick to what God's given you in the way of the Lord Jesus those verses help us see that the peace of Jesus can be understood as the reconciling favor of God on your life you've been made to be at peace with God through Christ God no longer looks at you as his enemy he will not condemn you it's God's grace bringing you near to himself Jesus said peace I leave with you my peace I give to you not as the world gives do I give you do not let your heart be troubled or let it be fearful now let me hasten through this so I can say this part at the end God's peace with us and in us is very precious it steadies and readies our hearts among a people overcome by division and hatred and fear and worry anxiety that's the world you live in that's the world

[68 : 04] I live in they don't know this peace the new American standard has a margin note about the word rule let the peace of Christ rule in your heart does anybody have a different word than rule there rule rule let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts okay it's all there all right the the new American standard has a margin note about that it can also be translated as act as arbiter I put it up here on the screen at the bottom that means act as umpire let let the peace of Jesus umpire your heart let it referee your heart in all that you think say and do let Jesus be the one that says safe or out that's got to go nope you're safe there we're good let his peace let you let the reconciling redeeming grace of

Jesus be the umpire of all that you think say and do because you're a redeemed person so you should act like it well let let let what Jesus has done for you in his grace be that umpire this is more than what would Jesus do we're way past that okay the second practical action that was the first that you can take in becoming more like Jesus is in verse 16 let the word of Christ richly dwell within you I won't say a lot about this one!

except to ask this what the word of Christ well in Colossians 1 5 you see the answer because of the hope laid up for you in heaven of which you previously heard in the word of truth the gospel that's the word of Christ it's the word of truth it's the gospel the word of Christ is the teaching of scripture the whole of scripture is the word of Christ or the product of his wisdom he is the truth and he taught the truth so let Christ's wise word richly dwell within you let it be abundantly at home in your heart God's home for the word of Jesus is your spiritually renewed heart so let that truth have an abundant influence on you let it help with the design and the desires of your heart let it form those and it will in time God's word should adorn the home of your heart with the beautiful riches of Christ's character wisdom and ways the third practical action you can take to be more like Jesus is in verse 17 notice what it says whatever you do in word or deed do all not some all in the name of the Lord Jesus this is just a very simplified way of saying make it about Jesus make being a wife about Jesus make being a husband!

about Jesus make being a single about Jesus make the way you! about Jeff is that really practical well I hope by now you are saying yes it is let me give you one final illustration before I stop I can illustrate what I'm talking about here in terms of God's design for marriage in counseling I ask couples this question what is God's design for your primary role as a husband to your wife okay I ask the husband what is God's design for your primary role sir as a husband to your wife do you

know God's design for your primary role and function as a Christian husband to your wife do you know what his primary role is for you how would you answer that see then I come over to the wife! [72 : 19] what is your! what is your primary role and function by God's design for you as a wife to your husband right she's saying to be like Christ I'll just let you think about that for a second how would you answer that if you were sitting there in front of me the answer is the same for both questions it isn't different for the husband and the wife it's the same and the answer helps define and measure how and speak and act toward one another in the daily issues of life together no matter what it is and this is so liberating I'm going to put it up here on the screen in marriage your primary role is to be God's instrument in helping your spouse be conformed to the image of Jesus to help them grow in Christ likeness it's just what Alonza said that is God's primary design for you as a spouse toward your husband your wife primary and that becomes how you take your spiritual pulse in your marriage now to what degree am I submitting to that role to that function to what degree do I understand

God's design for me in that function how much of my life and my marriage is being lived in a cognizant front lobed switched on kind of way to see that happen and then when you go through life together and you hit snags together in your relationship or whatever when you've trained yourself to think like this you're thinking in terms of alright what would it look like for me right now to be used of the Lord to help my spouse be conformed to the character of the Lord as we move through this together do you see the spiritual priority there it's beautiful isn't it I wish I could take credit for it Matt but you know what Jesus made it up not Jeff that's God's design and yes I can show you it all through scripture starting with Ephesians 5 when we learn to consistently think about all that we think say and do as being a loving display of the character of Jesus toward other people and as a way of investing in the spiritual growth of others and them becoming like Jesus we will go a long way in our own spiritual growth in the grace and knowledge of the

Lord I just read that off to you all right well let's pray together and then we'll let you get some goodies and we're around if you want to want to chat well dear heavenly father we thank you for your word and the richness that it is in our souls you know I honestly Lord I know as your servant here trying to deal with my own life and my own doubts and sins!

to some measure an imperfect presentation of this so I thank you so much for the power of your Holy Spirit that promises to be our counselor and our teacher I thank you God that I can trust you so fully with the souls of these precious precious souls and friends that I know that they're in the best hands possible as we sit under your word and the spirit comes to teach and train our hearts in what is true what is good what is right what is pure and honorable to you so I pray that my brothers and sisters will be challenged informed and encouraged edified built up and being able to leave here this week and finish the week out until we have the next Lord's Day learning to live to please you in all things let that be our highest aspiration goal and design in life that we would be pleasing to Jesus and all that we think say and do and we pray this for his glory amen