

## PART 14 – IT’S NOT COMPLICATED

### PART 2 – HOW TO CHANGE

We have been looking at [Romans 6:11-14](#) relative to “**reckoning and considering ourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord**”. In this study, I want to continue to develop Part 2 of all of these studies which is the crucial element of figuring out “HOW TO CHANGE”. **Knowing the truth without applying the truth to our life is really very serious.** The problem we so often have is that the truth is a belief that we hold, but it is not a belief that holds us.<sup>1</sup>

[James 4:17](#) says,

Jas 4:17 (NKJV) **Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do *it*, to him it is sin.**

Stated another way, **biblical information without biblical application has no value.** Think of it this way. Knowing the right thing to do, but then willfully choosing not to do it actually has a kind of condemning aspect to it. If you **know** that the speed limit is 55mph, but you get caught doing 70mph and you get a ticket, lose points, and receive a substantial fine, **you cannot blame that on the speed limit sign** – right? Please never lose sight of the simple fact that God holds you responsible for the decisions that you make in your life. For instance, Jesus said the following in [Mathew 12:36](#),

Mt 12:36 (NKJV) **But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.**

The word “**idle**” is often translated as careless or thoughtless. Just careless, completely thoughtless, just saying whatever you want to say. That is not good. A loose, critical, condescending, ugly, careless, and thoughtless tongue is not a good thing. Paul wrote the following in [Ephesians 4:29](#),

Eph 4:29 (NKJV) **Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.**

Once again, this is the law of sowing and reaping in play here, and the only way that you can change the results of “**corrupt words**” is to **say the right things in the right way at the right time.** The word “**corrupt**” literally means rotten and useless.<sup>2</sup> No one here likes to eat rotten food. You would be appalled if Brenda and I invited you over for supper one evening, but when you sat down to eat, all of the food was rotten, spoiled, putrid, sour, and rancid. I doubt that you would ever want to come back and eat with us, or even hang out with us. Well, what is any different when it comes to the relationships that we have with people if the way that we talk to them is corrupt, rotten, and useless. We will **never, never, never** make a meaningful spiritual impact or difference in their life – **NEVER**. When you guard your words and only say that which is edifying, you begin to express and live out your identity in Christ, and eventually your life will begin to make a significant difference in the lives of other people.

If you cannot be edifying in what you say to people, then you would be better off to not say anything at all - NOTHING. Let us assume that you know this, and that you have heard this truth over and over from this pulpit, you have read it multiple times in God’s Word, but you still have this ungodly propensity

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<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Harris, *sapros*, #4407, ep.

to just say whatever you want to say, whenever you want to say it, to whoever you want to say it, in whatever worthless tone you want to say it, then God says this is sin in your life. Think of it this way.

**Wrong words spoken in the wrong way at the wrong time will always produce the wrong results.**

What is the principle for [Romans 6:11](#) that we are considering? What is the change, the paradigm shift that we are trying to incorporate into our life? It is this – **STOP, RECKON, THEN CHOOSE GOD.** Stop, reckon, consider, think, then choose what you know God would want you to do. Over the span of your lifetime, you will probably find that the most damaging relational confrontations that you have ever experienced have been through your inappropriate, unwholesome, and ugly words. God wanted you to exercise self-control, but you decided that your way was better. What a really bad choice. Why? It is because God always has a much better plan for your life than you do. It really is very, very simple.

I can still clearly remember the very worst moment in my Christian life 42 years ago when I was young and just stupid. I went to my pastor, said the most inappropriate thing I could say to him, then just casually left as if I had done nothing wrong. It was the very worst moment of my Christian life – ever. I still remember it like it was yesterday and I still regret it. I went back and sought his forgiveness and he graciously forgave me, but the pain I caused in his life with my ugly, hurtful words was unforgivable on my part. I was a complete idiot. Did I stop, reckon, then choose God? Not on your life, and God literally disciplined me for 12 years! I said what I wanted to say and I said it how I wanted to say it. It was the very worst moment of my Christian life, and it still troubles me to this day that I could have spoken to someone who loved me the way that I did. **YOU ALWAYS REAP WHAT YOU SOW.**

Do not think for one second that you are the exception to God’s spiritual laws. That is a spiritually deadly, destructive, and devastating lie from the father of lies. Never forget what Paul wrote in [Galatians 6:7](#) when he said,

Gal 6:7 (NKJV) **Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.**

Okay, what do we have to know to develop **meaningful spiritual habits** in our life? Well, the first thing is that **everything that you need to develop godly spiritual habits is very simple.** Nothing that God ever asks us to do is complicated. It is always simple. Here is a great principle to understand.

**Always avoid shortcuts to spiritual growth.**

Why would I say that? Well, it is because there are no spiritual shortcuts to spiritual growth. If you as a beginner are just learning to play a musical instrument, in a couple of months you cannot be playing at the concert level. It simply will not happen. If you have just begun to learn how to fly an airplane and ask me to take your first test flight with you, please do not be offended if I give you the “dreaded look” which is “*Do I look stupid to you? Do you see stupid written across my forehead anywhere?*” The principle is simple - **you cannot shortcut the spiritual growth process.**<sup>3</sup> If you plant a young peach tree tomorrow, you cannot expect to have peaches in June of next year. It will not happen, and in the same way, any spiritual shortcut that you take will only lead you to greater frustration and

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<sup>3</sup> Covey, 44-45.

disappointment. Spiritual growth is always twofold: it is **truth based** and it is **character based**. Think of it in a different way.

**You must make whatever you are struggling with right on the inside before you can ever make it right on the outside.**<sup>4</sup>

Let us just say that you are always struggling with anger. Continually becoming angry and frustrated and irritated is always an issue of self-control, and that is something that you have to let God change on the inside. In almost every incident, what you get angry about is not really that important. You probably just had someone interfere or disagree with your “personal preferences”. You wanted something this way and they wanted it another way. You wanted to go here and they wanted to go there. You were in a hurry to get somewhere and they seemed to be indifferent to that. At the 38,000-foot level, none of this is really that important, so just STOP, RECKON, and CHOOSE GOD. Choose self-control. It is not complicated. **ANGER IS A LACK OF SELF-CONTROL**. Listen carefully. **When you become angry, at that moment, your life is getting out of control**. So, what does **Romans 6:11** say that you have to do? You STOP, RECKON, AND CHOOSE SELF-CONTROL. It is not complicated, and if you make it complicated, you will develop all kinds of reasons and excuses as to why you do not have to exercise self-control. This idea of “stop, reckon, and choose God” should become a habit of your life.

We have all heard of the adage of don’t put the cart ahead of the horse. What a great word picture! The horse is in the back and the cart he is supposed to be pulling is in the front. How silly do you think that is? It would actually be considered stupid, futile, absurd. Could you see someone whipping the horse and yelling “Push, push, push”? Well, if you do not get rid of all of negativity on the inside of your personal life, then you are no different than putting the cart in front of the horse. Listen carefully.

**You cannot have relational victories until you first have personal victories.**<sup>5</sup>

If you want to really be loved, then you have to be loveable. If you want to be trusted, then you have to be trustworthy. If you want to be appreciated, then you have to first show appreciation. The problem that most people have is that they want everyone else to change, but not themselves. With that perspective, what are they doing? Tell me? They are getting the cart before the horse.

Now, let me interject something at this point. The key to your influence in other people’s lives is two-fold. **The first is your godly character and the second is your spiritual consistency**. Godly character / spiritual consistency. Just add the two together. Someone who is consistently growing spiritually is consistently developing character in their life. The problem that many Christians have is simple – they are always running hot and cold. One day they are kind, the next day they are caustic and angry. One day they are gracious with their words and the next day they are extremely harsh and abrasive in what they say. One day they are patient and the next day they are demanding. One day they are fun to be with and the next day they just grumble and complain about anything and everything. If you find that to be the problem that you have, then you have to **STOP, RECKON, AND CHOOSE GOD**. Learning to STOP doing something that you know is not right is as important of a habit as you can develop in your life. If you are not able to control this hot and cold, up and down, on today and off tomorrow part of your

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<sup>4</sup> Covey, 50.

<sup>5</sup> Covey, 51.

personal life, then no one will listen to you or respect you. Why should they? You must allow God to develop on the inside of your personal life a consistent, God-honoring character. If this does not happen, you will always have broken relationships and trouble and disappointment will be waiting just outside of your door.

Now, I want to close this morning by reiterating that something that is spiritually and eternally critical is always at stake when we are just “**casually**” deciding whether or not we will actually follow Christ and be obedient to His Word. The stakes are very, very high – much higher than I can communicate. As your pastor, I have no intention of trying to arm twist you into being obedient to God’s Word. That would be an act of futility on my part because the desire to follow Christ and to be wholly obedient to Him is an issue of your heart. Listen carefully.

### **Our actions and our choices always reveal what is in our heart.**

We live in a Christian culture that has opened the door to a kind of “*pick and choose*” kind of mindset when it comes to obeying God. We obey God in this area, but ignore Him in another area. However, the New Testament does not even offer that as an option. As Christians, our identity in Christ is that we take up our cross daily and follow Christ. [1 Corinthians 10:31](#) says,

**1Co 10:31 (NKJV) Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**

These are the marks of true Christianity and not this cultural Christianity of take it or leave it. This is our identity in Christ. I want to read one last verse. Turn to [1 Corinthians 13:11](#) and follow as I read.

**1Co 13:11 (NKJV) When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.**

One of the true marks of a genuine believer is that when they come to Christ that they “**put away childish things**”. How easy it is to spend all of our time, energies, and resources focused on those things that have no eternal value whatsoever. “**Childish things**” are a thief of our spiritual life and our commitment to Christ and to those things that matter the most in life. You would think it to be very strange and absurd if one day when you were driving by the home of one of your Christian friends and you saw the husband playing in a sandbox with some Tonka toys and the wife playing “house” with some baby dolls and doll houses. Unfortunately, I believe that is probably the way that God often sees us when we consistently are giving ourselves to those things that contribute ZERO to our Christian life.

So, one major habit that I want to develop in my life is that I will always STOP, RECKON, and CHOOSE GOD. How do I do that? It is very simple. I STOP when I know is wrong or uncomfortable, I RECKON and consider God’s best and what He would want me to do, and then I CHOOSE GOD and His best for my life. Just keep reminding yourself of exactly what God wants you to do and you will become more and more inclined to do it. This is a very important habit for each of us is we truly want to be a genuine follower of Christ.

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