

Why Change Matters, How Change Happens – A Theology & Methodology of Transformation

Introduction

Let's say it very simply and clearly as we begin this session, that "change matters" because the change that God commands and requires is a change in worship-filled knowledge of Christ, and our response of praise and worship to Him.

In other words, the goal of spiritual growth and change is the knowledge and worship of God.

God is the goal of our lives, no matter how you describe the pursuit of growth and change.

The sum of our life with God on earth can be stated in terms of **Who you LOVE**:

Matthew 22:36-40 – "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And He said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 'This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 'The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 'On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

The Christian life is a life of loving God and loving your neighbor. We shouldn't think of those as two responsibilities, because you can't do one without the other.

There is also a sense in which the entire Christian life can be described in terms of **Who you KNOW**.

John 17:3 – This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

We might also state the whole of the Christian life in terms of **Who you WORSHIP**.

John 4:23-24 – "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. 24 "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

I think we could show other ideas as well: Who you **OBEY**, Who you **FOLLOW**, Who you **LIVE FOR**, Who you **SERVE**,...

The common denominator in all of those statements is the WHO involved ...

Romans 11:36–12:2 — **36** For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. **1** I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. **2** Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Notice...

The reality that all of life, and all things in this world, are designed to bring praise, honor, glory, and worship to the Lord.

The reality/truth that God is the goal of our lives is the grounds, and the motivation, for pursuing a life of obedience, service, and worship that causes/enables us to turn away from ungodliness and worldliness, and pursue the blessing that comes from knowing and worshipping Him in all things, and in all ways.

We have a tendency to perhaps focus on attaining the happiness, or blessing, or peace that we desire, and miss that those things ought to be (and can ONLY be) sought in and through our relationship with Christ.

We may even have a tendency to focus on working really hard to simply conform our outward lives to some standard—or at least to the degree that others see what we are outwardly—but miss the realities of doing those things as an overflow of a life of worship.

We CAN'T miss out on the reality that if all things are “from Him, through Him, and to Him,” that every failure to have HIM and His glory as our ultimate aim and purpose, is really a failure to put His glorious WORTH on display ...

... or to put it another way ...

Why Change Matters: *Sin is a Worship Disorder*

We are worshippers by the very nature of our being created in the image and likeness of God. Every time we sin, we fail to worship, believe, trust, honor, glorify and love God fully.

Any one of these terms might be more or less appropriate, depending on the nature of the particular sin in question. All of them speak to the ultimate goal of man's existence.

Pleasing God is More Important than Life Itself

2 Corinthians 5:9 – Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent [ALIVE or DEAD], to be pleasing to Him.

Paul says that this is our goal, in life or in death, whether home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. Consider the entire context of this passage ...

NEED TO BUILD THIS OUT

Your Life Must Ascribe Ultimate Worth to God

This is the goal of Christian living. We worship, when we display by our words, actions and attitudes that God alone is worthy of our loyalty and devotion. We cannot place another object of our affection above, beside or before God. No thing and no one can or should compete for our loyalty, devotion, affection or trust.

Our world has made gods out of many things, not usually physical idols.

Any time we seek to find our primary joy, satisfaction, meaning, purpose, pleasure, identity, etc., in anything other than God Himself, we have made that thing our functional god.

God has designed us to find our greatest joy and satisfaction by living in fellowship with Him.

Psalm 16:11 – You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

To the extent that you allow other gods to compete for your devotion and affection, or allow other gods or usurp the place God deserves in your life, to this same extent you will forfeit the blessedness of communing with God.

Mark 12:30 – You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.

This is WHY growth and change matters so much ... because it is a matter of living a life of WORSHIP—of putting the glorious worth and majesty of God on display by reflecting His character and nature, and living with a heart full of love, worship, and the affections that grow when we are in right relationship to Him.

We may actually focus too much on outward behavior—we might see changed behavior as the goal, rather than understanding that changed behavior that honors God must be born out of knowing and worshipping Christ more (ask the Pharisees).

You are not simply trying to simply BELIEVE the right things—that’s not a sufficient change.

You are not simply trying to get people to BEHAVE a certain way—also not a sufficient change.

Paul Viewed the Knowledge and Pursuit of Christ as the Aim of His Own Life

In Philippians we see that Paul’s passionate pursuit in life was the value of increased knowledge of Christ, the gaining of Christ Himself (a deepening of his walk with Christ), and a sharing in the life of Christ.

Philippians 3:7-11 – But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 9 and may be found in Him,

not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Is this your goal?

How Spiritual Growth/Change Happens

We have explored how the Word of God is SUFFICIENT for helping mankind become everything God has called them to be – partakers of the divine nature, fully equipped for every good work.

We drilled down a little bit into 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and discussed that the Scriptures are USEFUL or PROFITABLE—they are designed by God to profit/benefit our life by teaching, convicting, correcting, and training us in righteousness.

That “training in righteousness” is hard work! What does that hard work look like?

The very idea of training—disciplined instruction and repetition—communicates that spiritual growth and change does not usually happen in an instant. It comes through sustained effort, though we know that effort must be energized by the Spirit of Christ, apart from whom we can do nothing (John 15:5).

It is God who is at work in us to will and to work for His good pleasure (Philippians 2:12-13).

We need to know how to pursue and sustain lasting spiritual change and growth toward the goal of loving God and loving our neighbor as a fruit of having received the gospel of both our salvation and our sanctification.

How do we press toward the goal? Not just for a day, or a week, or even for a month, but in a way that produces lasting change from the heart, reflected in lasting change in our life, and relationships, and most important in relation to God!

How does the Bible “train us in righteousness”?

I love how we are told that this is actually the aim God has in giving us the Word of God.

2 Timothy 3:16–17 — **16** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **17** that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

TRAINING means that kind of instruction and discipline that is defined and exhibited in repeated practice and eventually a permanent change—like teaching kids to say “please” and “thank you.”

How does God Himself cause us to grow?

The Bible presents a very **synergistic** view of spiritual growth.

SYNERGISM – a fancy word for working together.

And what we see working together toward the end of spiritual growth and holiness is the heart of man (our mind, will, affections), and the Spirit of God.

Philippians 2:12–13 — 12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, **13** for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Jesus taught the same thing using the metaphor of the vine and branches.

John 15:4–5 — 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. **5** I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

It isn't that we can ABIDE by our own strength, or obey outwardly ONLY, without God being at work in us inwardly to accomplish something greater.

But, when we strive to live out God's word, by faith, depending on Him for the strength, and we continue in it (ABIDE in it), the long-term effect and result is spiritual growth.

Which means ...

... there is a sense in which we DO "cause" ourselves to grow spiritually. And that growth comes through faith-dependent, Spirit-empowered, obedient-effort.

How do WE actually "cause" ourselves to grow?

One thing, is certain, ... there is not a command in Scripture for us to "do" something that on a theoretical level—or truly spiritual level—we can't actually DO!

2 Peter 3:18 — 18 But **GROW** in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Clearly, only God can "cause" the growth. But like a **faithful farmer** growing corn, we need to fertilize the field, till the soil, plant the seeds, water the crop, and keep away the pests and disease.

The farmer doesn't "make the corn/wheat grow," but they must be a hard-working farmer for the crops to be abundant.

And it is the same with our own spiritual growth. God holds us so profoundly responsible for our own spiritual growth, that He commands us to "make it happen" so to speak.

Scripture describes this "hard working farmer" activity as a process involving three aspects.

Put off the old man, be renewed in the spirit of your mind, put on the new man

We see this three-fold pattern in numerous places, though worded differently.

Ephesians 4:22–24 — **22** to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, **23** and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, **24** and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Romans 12:1–2 — **1** I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. **2** Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

James 1:21–22 — **21** Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. **22** But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

It is through this very active process, dependent on the Spirit, informed by the Word of God, and pursued with intention and effort, that God actually causes us to grow.

There are many inter-related aspects to this “***put off sin/renew the mind/put on virtue***” dynamic. But we must recognize that what God wants to change is our HEART, and that our heart is that complex/storehouse of motives, desires, and intentions.

But this real “putting off” and “spiritual renewal” and “putting on” is supposed to be pursued from a transformed heart, one that loves the Lord and loves his neighbor as himself.

That means attitudes, desires, and motives are VERY important to understand.

Motives and Desires are all About the Heart

Ed Welch boils down a dozen or so desires and motives.¹ An exhaustive list would be endless, but this list provides a sample that will likely cover the vast majority of cases you deal with.

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| ▪ Pleasure | ▪ Freedom/Autonomy |
| ▪ Power | ▪ Peace |
| ▪ Love/Intimacy | ▪ Happiness |
| ▪ Comfort | ▪ Significance/Reputation |
| ▪ Meaning/Purpose | ▪ Respect/Admiration |
| ▪ Control | ▪ Success |

¹ Edward T. Welch, Motives: Why Do I Do the Things I Do?, *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, Fall 2003.

Beneath the surface of our sins lie desires and motives like these. Often it is a combination of them that go into a wrong choice or response in life. Even a very common sin problem can grow out of desires and motives that are very different for different people.

Take the drunkard as an example. It is not hard to imagine that someone could develop a drinking or drug problem that is motivated by a desire for comfort, pleasure, power, freedom from pain, autonomy, or other reasons. Until you help a person understand the desire or motive that has been hijacked and is now being controlled by the sin, you will have a hard time helping them understand and overcome their sin.

They are—consciously or unconsciously—looking to the drug for the thing they ought to be looking to Jesus for.

Now maybe the drunkard is an easy target.

How about you, the mother of three children, when you find yourself often frustrated and frequently yelling out of exasperation?

What is it that your heart is longing for so much, that when you can't get it, your heart bursts with self-will, and anger, and lack of self-control?

You are “setting your heart” on something, you are longing for something, and the children aren't delivering it, and your circumstances are denying it to you.

But you are forgetting that your life must be aimed at knowing, worshipping, and pleasing your Savior, not on your own comfort, satisfaction, or just rest/peace—unless you're finding those things in Him, and not in your circumstances.

The same could be said of someone who is not happy at work—you don't find work satisfying, and you find your boss or co-workers to be a nuisance at best, and can't stop criticizing them (in your heart, or to your spouse), but you have no way out.

What has overshadowed your heart/mind, what are you wanting so badly, that you have forgotten to set your heart on worshipping God with a thankful heart right through the imperfections of living in a sin-cursed world.

Perhaps I should talk about expectations in marriage—husbands/wives?

All of our struggles with sin ought to be pointing us back to the fact that “knowing and worshipping” Jesus is the goal of our lives—and therefore, the goal of ministering the Word of God to our own hearts, and to the hearts of others.

And, this is also why understanding the desires, motivations, and intentions of the heart are critical.

A good thing gone bad

Notice that many of the motives and desires above are not bad in and of themselves. They are not “idols” by nature. These things “become” idols when they take control of us, when we want

them too much, when our desires for those things overpower our desire to worship, serve, and obey the Lord Jesus. They are idols because you make them more important than pleasing God.

This is how you identify when an otherwise legitimate desire has become an idol of the heart. How do you respond when you do not, or cannot, have that desire fulfilled?

A legitimate desire has become an idol when...

- If the desire itself is sinful; or...
- You sin if your desire is not fulfilled; or...
- You sin in order to fulfill your desire

For example, a husband regularly becomes angry at his wife because she does not respect him. His desire to be respected is a legitimate desire. Scripture instructs her, “the wife must see to it that she respects her husband” (Eph 5:33). However, when he does not get respect, he explodes and shouts at his wife, multiplying the sin in their home. He does not see how he has made his wife’s obedience more important than his own. Nor does he see that his own sin has revealed that, in those moments, he is valuing his desire for respect more than he values the honor and glory of God.

In this case, James 1:13-15 has come to life. He is not being tempted by God (or his wife). He has been tempted, drawn away, and enticed by his own lust/desire for respect. This desire has conceived displeasure in his heart and given birth to an outburst of anger.

While we list desires and motives above that are spiritual, it is true that desires which are more tied to our earthly, material existence can also become IDOLS! It could be sexual desire (or any pleasure, like fun, food, or recreation), a healthy body, a certain body shape, having certain friends (a boyfriend or girlfriend), etc.

Again, the list is potentially limitless to how even legitimate desires can draw us away and entice us to sin by making our pursuit of that desire or goal more important than worship and obedience to Christ.

The biblical counselor must “get to the heart issue.” The biblical counselor must often teach and train others to “get to the heart issue.”

As we pursue this growth in a healthy way, I might suggest that there are a number of graces and disciplines that are always a part of this dependent pursuit of growth.

Ten Keys to Spiritual Growth and Change²

These are not 10 STEPS to spiritual growth. They express overlapping mindsets, actions, attitudes, and truths to remember, which are all necessary and mandatory elements of pursuing biblical change (spiritual growth).

² I got these from Stuart Scott’s plenary address on the topic at the 2015 National ACBC Conference. He had 13 – I left a couple out.

1. Understand and pay attention to your heart

Change and growth MUST take place from the inside out! Spiritual growth happens in the inner man. Going back to our diagram at the beginning, the heart is the source of our thoughts, desires, intentions, motives, goals, and choices.

The central focus of the Bible as it relates to your inner man is on the idea of the HEART. The heart is the real you. It is where your thoughts, affections, emotions, desires, and the will (your choices) come from.

Proverbs 4:23 — 23 Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

Thoughts have two aspects. (1) There is what you KNOW, or what you believe is TRUE. And, (2) there is what you choose to meditate on, to daydream about. So, “keep your heart with vigilance,” involves knowing and believing what is true. And, it also involves focusing on, and enjoying, the truths and realities that God tells us to.

Naturally, what you believe and think about has a tremendous impact on what you DESIRE, and how you FEEL about the people and things in your life.

There is no possible way to truly change and grow spiritually, if you are not committed to paying close attention to what you believe, what you ponder, what you contemplate, and what you long for.

That is the nature of the advice we just read:

Proverbs 4:23 — 23 Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

This is HOW we keep a guard around our heart with vigilance. We willingly, and joyfully, for the glory of God, and the good of our souls, CHOOSE what we will focus on, and what we will mentally extol and value.

That is the first KEY to spiritual growth and change.

2. Understand and live according to your new identity in Christ

What is that identity? Adopted sons of the Living God, saints, holy and beloved, a chosen people, a holy nation...

Paul describes the reality of your new identity in Christ in vivid terms in Romans 6 – I would love to go over the whole passage and unpack the significance of all these phrases, but perhaps just letting them roll together, one after the other, will impact you.

By the way, all of these statements of your identity in Christ are part of Paul’s answer to the question, “Are we to continue in sin?”

Romans 6:2–22 — 1 ... [you have] died to sin ... raised from the dead ... [to] walk in newness of life ... [your] old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, ... no longer be enslaved to sin ... [you have] been set free from sin ... [therefore] consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus...[you] have been brought from death to life,... your members ... [are] ...instruments for righteousness... sin [has] no

dominion over you, ... [though you] were once slaves of sin [you] have become obedient from the heart ... having been set free from sin, [you] have become slaves of righteousness... **22** But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.

Those are all amazing realities that God declares are true of EVERY believer! You are no longer ENSLAVED to sin. You have been made free from sin, brother! This now defines you!

Jesus...

Titus 2:14 — 14 ... gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

Now, it is a matter of living out who you really are!

Jesus died, and redeemed you, and changed you, so that you are not DEFINED by those things that characterized you before your conversion, and that characterize unbelievers even still. That's NOT who you really ARE.

3. Purpose to live dependently pursuing obedience to Christ as Lord

Let me state the obvious: "God doesn't command you to try. God commands you to obey!"

Christian, your life is not your own, it belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ—He RULES you, He is both Savior, and LORD!

There is a place for simply obeying God's Word – if it says, "let no unwholesome word proceed out of your mouth," then you need to stop using crass, offensive, unedifying language.

Don't lie! Pay your taxes! Respect your husbands! Stop being harsh with your wives!

There are parts of the evangelical world that have somehow drifted so far from understanding what it means to obey Jesus Christ, that anything that involves a black and white standard is called legalism.

Obedience and good works aren't bad. Trusting in your good works for salvation is bad. But obeying as a matter of submission to Jesus as Lord is a GOOD thing.

Counseling, spiritual growth, significant change, discipleship—***it certainly involves more than do's and don'ts, but it definitely doesn't involve less than that.***

Here is how you evidence that your pursuit of obedience is not just an outward, Pharisaical, self-righteous pursuit.

4. Have a personal, abiding, growing relationship with God through the Word and prayer

This is another way of reminding ourselves that "the goal of counseling is Christ Himself!" We need to grasp that we are created for Jesus, and for His good pleasure. His desire is to know us, and to be known by us, which only happens as we engage in the pursuit of relationship through the Word of God and prayer.

Too often I see counseling intake forms in this office, where a husband or wife say, “It’s like we are living together as indifferent roommates.” They stopped spending time together, listening to one another, sharing life with each other, enjoying one another’s company, and following after common pursuits.

Sadly, those same mistakes are often made by the Bride of Christ, and our relationship can quickly become distant, impersonal, and eventually so stagnant you question whether it exists. Like a stagnant marriage, you begin to question (or believe that) if everyone wouldn’t just be happier if you walked away.

That is not the answer. The answer is ALWAYS to renew a genuine and personal relationship. Praying and reading the Bible isn’t an end in itself either. The end in mind is a personal, abiding, growing relationship with the Living God, through the Lord Jesus Christ.

That means learning to care about what God cares about, marveling at who God is, being amazed at what God does, praising Him for His work, and begging Him for His help.

That is a KEY to spiritual growth and change.

5. Willingly respond as radically as necessary to pervasive sins

The aim of God’s work is to train us toward godliness and holiness.

With pervasive, life-dominating sin, there is really no other way to deal with them but to get radical.

Matthew 5:29–30 — 29 If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. **30** And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

It may need a change of friends, jobs, devices, even distancing yourself from a family member that may be a stumbling block. It may involve a level of accountability that is uncomfortable.

WHATEVER IT TAKES is the point!

Romans 13:14 — 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

6. Pursue relational involvement in the local church (a good, solid, biblical church)

Not just getting (from ministry), but giving, serving, loving others—getting focus off yourself and onto others.

We aren’t talking about getting so involved you neglect other responsibilities (like family, work, etc.). But we are certainly talking about reordering misplaced priorities, or eliminating the things in your life that God doesn’t describe or define as a responsibility at all. Usually, for most stagnant believers, I find there is a LOT of rest, relaxation, and entertainment in their schedule.

If I'm trying to help someone change and grow, I may get a couple of hours a week at best. It's hard to help someone grow if they are giving more time to social media, Pinterest, or ESPN, than they are to pursuing growth and change.

At some level it is a matter of simple math, add up the hours, and ask yourself whether pursuing the life of God, through the life of the church, is as important to you, as it is to God.

There is no arbitrary time limit, or standard, to place on that. It is a matter of personal conscience. But if you're never asking a counselee to consider the important question, "How can I engage in spiritual pursuits more faithfully," then you're not helping them pay close enough attention to what is the highest calling of their life.

7. Cultivate thankfulness

I want you to notice something in Ephesians 5, a context that is talking about spiritual growth, putting off, putting on. Amidst a litany of issues that are sinfully appealing and difficult to overcome, Paul tosses in thanksgiving.

Ephesians 5:3–5 — 3 But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. **4** Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, **but instead let there be thanksgiving.** **5** For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

I don't really have the time to develop the idea here, but what is clear is that overcoming sin, and pursuing what it means to be a growing imitator of the Lord Jesus,...

...that kind of life includes a LOT of thanksgiving.

If we spent more time thanking God for His holiness, and for His good gifts to us, and for His gracious work in us...

...then we would be so much more mindful of every attack we face that is contrary to those realities.

Spiritually stagnant people are rarely sensitive and mindful of the goodness, greatness, and graciousness of God.

8. Engage in the spiritual battle with hope

Ephesians 6 reminds us that we are in a spiritual battle, but we are also told that the outcome of that spiritual battle is certain—we are victorious in Christ.

Galatians 5:17 — 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

But...

1 John 5:4 — 4 For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

When we live a believing, trusting, faith-filled life, then we have guarantee that it can be a victorious life.

So, we can engage in the spiritual battle with hope.

9. Prayerfully, and believingly, tap into the personally sufficient grace of God in your life

Whatever place God has you, there is always sufficient grace for living and responding in that place of life.

Hebrews 4:16 — 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Go to the throne of grace confidently – don't let your struggle drive you AWAY from God, let it drive you TO God, and to the throne of grace, where you will find mercy and help. It starts with the humility that acknowledges the spiritual bankruptcy and weakness, that you NEED mercy, that you NEED help,...

...and then it continues by prayerfully, believingly, tapping into that mercy and help in the midst of your need.

2 Corinthians 10:3–4 — 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. **4** For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

And...

2 Corinthians 12:9–10 — 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for **my [God's] power is made perfect in weakness.**" Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. **10** For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For **when I am weak, then I am strong.**

One last KEY to spiritual growth and change...

10. Let the hope of Christ's return, and the promises of God, motivate you even more

There are numerous reasons that we ought to be anchoring our hearts on the hope of Christ's return. For one, every struggle we have with sin, or with the difficulty of growing spiritually, will be OVER on that day.

That is why Peter says...

1 Peter 1:13 — 13 Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The grace we need will be FULLY realized on that day, so set your fully on it right now.

But John also reminds us that this is a motivation to pursue growth and change in the present too. Everything that God has guaranteed for me in the future, I want to strive to obtain and live up to in the present.

1 John 3:2-3 — 2 Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. **3** And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

A PERSONAL EXAMPLE:

Purposing to act immediately when asked.

The Life that I Now Live ...

Finish with Galatians 2:20.

Galatians 2:20 — 20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.