

Three Truths That Lead to Change

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 July 2026

[0:00] Good morning, everyone. My name is BK. I have the pleasure of serving as the lead pastor. With three truths that we need to learn if we are ever going to change, to mature, to grow up.

What kind of change? Well, maybe you're tired of losing your temper. Maybe you're exhausted by the same temptation, defeating you again and again.

Maybe you've spent years trying to overcome anxiety, fear, or worry. Maybe it's bitterness has taken root in your life and no matter how hard you try, you cannot seem to forgive.

And maybe, for some, your life is heading in this direction, but you so desperately want it to go in the opposite.

Direction. And perhaps maybe you've promised yourself a hundred times or promised God a hundred times, this will be the last time, only to find yourself back in the same place all over again.

[1:44] Maybe it could be as simple as, Lord, I want to be mature. I want to grow up. I am tired of living life like an immature believer.

And the fact is, you don't simply want to behave differently. You believe at the core of your being that you need to become a different kind of person.

But there's some problems to this. The first problem, it's not that you don't want to change. The problem that most people experience is they're looking for change in the wrong place.

They're looking for change in the wrong place. So this morning, today, we begin to learn what looking in the right place looks like.

Looking in the right place looks like so we can understand what it truly means to change. Before I go any further, let me pray.

[2:55] Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, we just give you thanks for the Apostle Paul and where he grips us. He grips us right at our heart.

He grips us at the human condition that every single person here knows, understands, and feels. We know what it is to be frustrated when things aren't going our way.

And we know our way is largely caused by our unwillingness to change or the battle that we have. We're going in a direction we do not want to go in.

We say things we do not want to say. We have these thoughts that we do not want to think. And actions we do that we so desperately do not want to do.

Father, I pray that your words written through the Apostle Paul, through the power of the Holy Spirit, would penetrate our thick hearts, our stubborn hearts.

[4:02] For some, it's our tired hearts. And I pray that this sermon would be uplifting for those who have been asking these questions and seeking these answers, but they've been looking for answers in all the wrong places.

I pray today would be the first step to understanding not only the human condition, but how God works in us to bring about the change for righteousness that we so richly desire.

So we thank you, and I ask that you would give my voice clarity throughout this sermon, and that you'd give these people ears to hear. In your name we pray, amen.

So this morning we're coming to verses 18 through 20, and some of you who have been reading ahead might be thinking, hey, BK, this looks almost like verses 15 through 17.

In fact, Paul is repeating himself here, but you'd be almost right to say it's him repeating himself. Because Paul almost says the same thing.

[5:18] Paul has spoken to us in verses 15 through 17. He talks about his desire of wanting to do good. He talks about his failing, and he talks about this power of indwelling sin that exists in him.

Well, if I can spare you the suspense, here is where the key difference lies. In verses 15 to 17, Paul is describing the human struggle.

In today's verses 18 and 20, Paul explains the reason for this struggle. Last sermon, the question that was answered is, why do I do what I hate to do?

This morning the question becomes, why can't I seem to change? I think every person has asked that question at some point in their life.

You do something, you say something, you have this thought in your head, and you ask yourself, why in the world am I thinking, saying, and doing these things? And then you have these other questions that come up in your head.

[6:30] You start to think, am I even a Christian? Maybe I'm the wrong kind of Christian. And the result, when you give in to those thoughts, and you start perpetually asking yourself, you end up spending your life trapped in a cycle of failure.

Right? You do an action you regret, and that action is followed by guilt. And then you have this guilt, which is followed by this renewed determination.

I'm not going to do that anymore. And then that renewed determination is sadly followed by another failure, which leads to a repeating of the same cycle.

And then what eventually happens, when you get into this cycle of failure, you start to experience a state of spiritual depression.

You start to ask yourself, maybe spiritual victory is only for the mighty people of God, the holy rollers, right? The pastors, the missionaries, my grandma, right?

[7:49] The people who come from generations of Christians, they're the only ones who are ever going to experience this feeling before God. And I am somehow relinquished to a life that is not quite what it's supposed to be.

Well, I'm here to tell you the good news that Paul has an answer for you. And the answer is probably not the one that you expected. You see, the problem is not that you don't know enough. The problem is not that you don't want holiness badly enough, or you do not want righteousness enough, or you don't want to do what's good enough.

The problem is not that you haven't tried hard enough. The problem is that you don't want what God wants. We're going to learn that Paul says the problem lies in the flesh itself.

The apostle Paul in this text tells us that there is something fundamentally incapable within us that cannot produce the righteousness that God requires.

[8:59] Let me repeat that quote. So if you are asking why this text matters so much, this is the reason.

So let's just look at the text. We're going to read. I'm going to start in verse 15 here. All right? So we're in Romans 7, starting in verse 15. So Paul says, For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now, if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, and that is good.

So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin which dwells within me. Verse 18. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is in my flesh.

For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.

[10:23] Now, if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but the sin that dwells within me. So this morning we're going to look at three truths that we need to accept if we are going to change, if we're going to mature, if we are going to live a life in harmony with God's word.

All right? Three simple truths. The first truth that we need to believe, to understand, is the flesh cannot produce what God requires.

The flesh cannot produce what God requires. Let's just take a look at the first part of Romans 7, 18. He says, For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is my flesh.

Like I said last week, we looked at the struggle. This morning, Paul is explaining the cause. If you notice, verse 18 begins with the word for.

So Paul is giving the reason for everything he's just said. He's answering the question, Why do I fail? Why do I keep doing what I hate? Why is this battle so relentless?

[11:38] And he simply says, Because I know that nothing good dwells in me that is in my flesh. This is a humbling statement Paul makes.

Notice what he doesn't say. He doesn't say there isn't much good. He doesn't say, Hey, you know, I got a few weak areas. He doesn't say my strengths outweigh my weaknesses.

He simply tells us this truth. Nothing good dwells in my flesh. Nothing. He's absolute. So here is where I want you to see one of the key differences.

Notice what Paul writes in verse 15. He says, For I do not understand my own actions. And if you remember a couple of sermons ago, he's expressing, I'm bewildered.

I do these things that I do not do. And I'm like, What am I doing? Why am I doing this? I do not understand. Now in verse 18, Paul knows very well why he does those actions.

[12 : 48] For I know that nothing good dwells in me. Verse 15, He is confused. Verse 18, His theology does not confuse him.

See, there are moments when we don't understand why we sin. But Paul says, I do know this much. I know where the sin comes from. Now what Paul is demonstrating is called spiritual maturity.

Spiritual maturity. Because here's the thing. Mature Christians don't become more confident in themselves. Mature Christians do not become more confident in themselves.

You know what they become? More honest with themselves. A mature Christian is one who is honest with themselves. The longer Paul walks with Christ, the less confidence he has in his own flesh.

And if you know Paul, his resume outdoes pretty much any spiritual man that has walked the face of the earth. The greatest educated. You know, he was the greatest Pharisee.

[13 : 53] He knew the law. Everyone thought on the outside he was righteous in every way. But Paul, as he grows in his walk with Christ, the less confidence he has in his own flesh.

And here's the thing. This runs absolutely counter to our culture. Our world says, believe in yourself. Paul says, don't trust your flesh.

Our world says, look within. Paul says, the problem is within. Our world says, you have everything you need inside you.

And Paul says, nothing good dwells in my flesh. See, the gospel never ever tells us to believe in ourselves. The gospel tells us to believe in Jesus Christ.

Amen? Now, I want you to pay attention to the qualifying statement that he makes here. He says, in my flesh.

[14 : 59] And it's critical to understand this. Because Paul is not saying that nothing good exists anywhere in him. He did not say he would, because if he did that, he would be contradicting everything that we've learned in Romans.

Because a few verses earlier, he said, I delight in the law of God. The truth of the matter is, unbelievers don't delight in the law of God. Paul has already stated, I hate my sin.

Those who do not believe in God do not hate their sin. And he's already said, I desire to do what is right. And we learned last week that desires evidence of God working in your heart.

That is God working inside you, that you are his. Because you desire what is of God. So Paul is not saying there's absolutely no good in me.

He's saying there is no good in my flesh. Now, that word flesh is one of Paul's most important theological terms.

[16 : 07] And he's not talking about the skin, the muscles, the physical body. Because if you remember the Greeks, and some thought, you know, if I, there's been a whole bunch of crazy cults that have existed.

If I can just get out of this body, I will somehow be free of sin. You know what? Our bodies are good. God created them. They're good. So he's not talking about that.

So when Paul uses the word flesh here, he's describing what remains of our sinful nature, the old man.

The disease that we inherited from Adam that still clings to every believer until glory. If anybody ever tells you that they are at a place where they do not sin, they are either looney tunes or they're already in heaven.

Right? If they're living on this earth, they still have sin. They are still tainted with the same rebellion as Adam. But, the flesh is not the believer's identity in Christ.

[17 : 23] That's why Paul so beautifully starts this letter of Romans. Romans, it's written to the saints. Those who are right with God, not sinners.

Paul is very specific that, and if you don't know, anywhere in Scripture, it never refers to a Christian as a sinner. Do you know that? Never. We are always referred to as saints.

We've been redeemed. Sometimes, yes, we are saints who sin, but never are we identified as our personhood as being a sinner.

We rejoice in this. And this is why many commentators carefully distinguish between being, there's terms, there's in the flesh, which will mean in the realm of unbelief, and still having the flesh present, which is an enemy within the believer.

But the Christian, as we know, is no longer controlled by the flesh. But we also know that the flesh has not been removed, and that's why the battle continues.

[18:41] This illustration, and it's kind of a sad illustration, and I had a friend, they purchased this house, and they decide to make it look really good, they've got nice flower beds, they put on a great painting, they go through, they put in all new floors, and they finally discover that the foundation is cracked, and there's really no saving the house.

So no matter how beautiful they made it look on the outside, there was something corrupt and broken at the very foundation of the house that you could not see.

Paul says that is what the flesh is like. Our problem isn't merely bad habits. It's not that we're uneducated or we're in poor circumstances.

Paul is essentially saying, as one author writes, deep within fallen humanity is something fundamentally incapable of producing the righteousness that God requires.

sinner. And this is where many sincere Christians become discouraged. If I just become more disciplined, if I try harder, if I make a better commitment.

[20:04] Any Catholics here? I know there's a few of you. Former Catholics, former Catholics here, right? You know this one. If I can only make myself feel more guilty, if I make myself feel more guilty, that's going to motivate me to change, right?

If I can just experience more guilt and shame, then all will be made better. Then I'll finally conquer sin.

But Paul says, you're asking the flesh to do something it cannot do. You're expecting the very thing that has failed you to become your source of victory.

You get that? your flesh has failed you. Why would you depend on the flesh to make things right with God? It's like trying to jump start a car with a dead battery.

Try it again, try it again, try it again. And sometimes we're like that. It's dead. God's need to be to be done.

[21:14] problem isn't the effort. The problem is our inability. We can't. The flesh doesn't need improvement.

The flesh needs to be overruled by the power of the Holy Spirit. God's need to be to be to be through. Christian life is never about self-improvement. The Christian life is about spirit and power transformation.

And every time we place our confidence back in ourselves, we are building on a foundation that Paul says has no ability to produce lasting righteousness.

No matter the paint, the garden you put on the outside of that house, that foundation is broken. And this truth leads directly to Paul's next truth.

That if the flesh cannot produce righteousness, then why do we still find ourselves sincerely wanting to obey God? Paul answers this in the second half of verse 18 and into verse 19 where he says, for I have the desire to do what is right, right, but not the ability to carry it out.

[22:34] So the second truth I want to bring to you this morning is, right desires alone cannot produce right living. Right desires cannot produce right living.

Like we can have all the desire we want, but we cannot produce right living. For he says, for I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.

for I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. You see, Paul has already told us where the problem lies.

It's nothing good in my flesh. But he understands that a second question arises, that if the flesh is so corrupt, why do I genuinely want to obey God?

after all, before Christ, we did not care about pleasing him. Before we knew Christ, we were not grieving over our sin, we were not longing for holiness.

[23:37] How many people here know? Non-Christians, people who do not believe, do not believe in God saying, man, I long for holiness. I long for that righteousness in my heart, right?

You see that Paul is telling us that something has changed. And Paul acknowledges this change. He says, for I have the desire to do what is right.

You see, when we are in Christ, we have a new desire. Notice what Paul does not say. He doesn't say, I wish I wouldn't get caught. He doesn't say, I wish the consequences weren't so painful.

Nor does he say, I wish I didn't feel so bad. He says, I desire to do what is right. And as we learned last week, the desire is evidence of the new birth.

Before God saves us, our hearts don't naturally move toward him. Paul has already taught us earlier that none are righteous and no one seeks God.

[24 : 44] So left to ourselves, we don't pursue righteousness. We pursue ourselves. So the question is, where did this new desire come from?

Paul is telling us that it comes from God. Tells us that the Holy Spirit has changed Paul's heart. Paul now loves what he once ignored.

He hates what he once embraced and he genuinely wants to obey. And this is an encouragement. Because as we learned last week, many believers wonder, if I still struggle, maybe I'm not saved.

But Paul is saying no. The struggle is the evidence of God changing you. The very desire to obey God is evidence that God has already begun his work in you.

You see, dead hearts don't long for holiness. Regenerate hearts do. But here's the kicker. Where many people get confused is desire is not the same as ability.

[25 : 53] I desired to be a major league baseball player. I did. I wanted to be the greatest pitcher since Nolan Ryan. He threw 108 miles an hour.

I barely cracked 80. You know, big difference in those things. But I desired. I was a kid. Mom will tell you there was not a day I would not go and play baseball. I would gather whoever it is.

I'd go to the park, train, train, train. But that desire produced bupkis. So he says, I do not have the ability to carry it out.

And there's a distinction. Like I said, he is a desire but lacks ability. And this is a completely different problem. Because sometimes we think our greatest need is more about motivation.

But Paul says, no, the problem isn't motivation. The problem is power. The problem is power. You can sincerely desire holiness and still fail to produce it in your own strength.

[26 : 57] You see, this is a truth our culture will never understand. Because as you know, everything around us says if you want something badly enough, you can do it.

Right? Believe in yourself. Dig deeper. Push harder. Stay disciplined. Want it more. And the Christian world sometimes says the same thing.

Pray harder. Read more. Make another commitment. Try again. Go to church more. Perhaps that is why you are here today. Life has been a struggle and you wonder maybe the magic pill is found in just showing up.

Now, don't get me wrong. Discipline certainly has its place. Prayer matters. Amen? Bible reading matters. Amen?

Obedience matters. Holy cow. Obedience matters. Bring out the better Baptists here. Obedience matters, right? Amen, right?

[28 : 05] And yes, church matters. But Paul is exposing something underneath all of this. And that flesh has no ability to produce the righteousness that God requires.

You know what proves this? Israel. The Mosaic covenant. God gave Israel a perfect law.

God revealed himself visibly at night. They could see a pillar of fire and during the day a cloud and it would literally move and lead them and Moses would do these incredible miracles and you'd think if we could just see God work, we'd be all in, right?

If we could see all these things but yet the Bible tells us generation after generation proved the reality that the problem was never the law, the problem was the human heart.

The law could expose sin, the law could restrain sin, the law could even condemn sin, but the law could never save from sin.

[29 : 19] Right? And that is exactly Paul's point here. If God's own covenant given through Moses cannot produce obedience and fallen people, then neither will your willpower.

The new covenant doesn't simply give us a better command. The new covenant gives us a new heart which is found in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Right? But God doesn't merely tell us what righteousness looks like. God actually produces it in his people. Now notice how Paul describes this struggle in verse 19.

For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. See, Paul is saying I don't merely fail.

He actually names two sides. There's good and bad. There's good that he longs to do and there's evil that he refuses to embrace. But I want you to notice something.

[30 : 26] Paul never redefines the sin. Paul never excuses the sin. Paul never softens the sin. Simply, what God calls good, Paul calls good.

And what God calls evil, Paul calls evil. evil. And this is one of the clearest pieces of evidence that God has changed his heart.

And you can admit that it is good because God calls it good. This is bad because God calls it bad. That is evidence that you understand what God wants.

See, before Christ, when we're confronted with our sin, we justify it, right? Justify it. I was in a bad mood. You don't know where I come from.

I don't have loving parents who taught me those things. We defend our sin. I was really hangry, man. There was no Snickers bar around. I had to sin.

[31 : 25] We blamed others for our sin. You do not know how annoying my brother really is. And then we renamed our sin.

You see, but the new heart that God gives us agrees with God. Even when we fail to obey him, we agree with the verdict.

And the struggle we experience reveals that our moral compass has been transformed and this is where I think many believers will recognize themselves.

They sin and they feel terrible. So they become more determined. Tomorrow will be different. I'm going to make new promises.

I'm going to wake up at 7 and not 8 and have a devotion. Maybe I'm even going to throw away that phone or delete that app or change my schedule or find a new accountability partner.

[32 : 27] All good things, but underneath it they're still trusting in themselves. themselves. And because they're trusting in themselves, it leads to consistent failure.

And then comes the guilt, the renewed determination, then another failure. But I want you to notice what is at the center of that cycle. You want to know what the center is?

Me. My resolve. My commitment. My discipline. My strength. My plan. See, even though it sounds good, we're still the hero of the story, right?

And Paul reminds us again, the flesh cannot produce only what the spirit can accomplish. No better story in all of Scripture tells us about one's desire and how we fail in the ability.

I don't believe there's anyone here ever question the apostle Peter's sincerity. Remember the night Jesus was arrested, Peter made one of the boldest declarations in Scripture.

[33 : 40] Even if all those, all those other apostles deny you, I never will. Do we think he meant it? Absolutely every word.

We believe his desire was genuine. His love for Christ was genuine. His commitment was genuine. But only a few hours later, he didn't just deny Christ once, not twice, three times.

It proves to us that sincere desire is not the same as spiritual strength. Peter wasn't lying when he promised loyalty.

He simply overestimated himself. And then we read this different Peter after Pentecost, when he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Did he ever deny Christ again? No way. And it wasn't because his love for Christ was greater, but because he now had a greater power working through him.

[34 : 52] And this is what Paul is getting at this morning. You see, there is a lesson here that sometimes takes Christians many years to learn.

God is not trying to make you more self-reliant. God is not trying to make you more self-reliant. God is teaching you to become increasingly Christ-dependent.

You with me on that? We get this crazy thing in our head, right? That I don't need to rely on God. You don't know how many verses I've memorized, how many times I've been going to church, and all these wonderful Christian things we do.

I'm okay. You know what? I'm so good, I'm not even going to waste God's time with my prayer.

Right? Why would I waste that? You know, there's other people that need their prayers.

God needs to hear their prayers more than our prayers. I've got it covered. I've got it covered. No, that's not how a mature Christian speaks. That's an immature Christian. A mature Christian

becomes increasingly Christ-dependent.

[36:04] But here's the thing, when we sit here and we struggle, sometimes God allows that struggle to reach so that we would reach the end of ourselves and finally start trusting him, not us.

So what Paul is writing here, he's not writing to us as a defeated man. He's writing as a man who has learned one of the greatest, precious lessons in the Christian life, and he knows that every ounce of confidence placed in his flesh will eventually disappoint him.

But the flesh can make promises, but it can never produce holiness. And this brings us to Paul's conclusion.

He repeats what he said back in verse 17, not because he's out of things to say, but because he wants us to understand where the real battle lies. Verse 20 says, Now, if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

Now notice Paul isn't excusing his sin. Paul is identifying his enemy. And unless we identify the proper enemy, we will spend the rest of our lives fighting the wrong battle.

[37:27] Third truth, lasting victory begins when we stop trusting ourselves. Lasting victory begins when we stop trusting ourselves.

Now, if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but the sin that dwells within me. Now, Paul is repeating almost exactly what he said back in verse 17.

At first, we wonder why after all, didn't he already tell us this? But now, we can understand why he repeats it.

Verse 7 gives us the fact. Verse 18 gives us the reason. Verse 19 illustrates the application. Now, verse 20 drives the truth home one final time.

And Paul wants this truth fixed in our minds all the time. Lasting victory begins when we stop trusting ourselves.

[38:39] Now, notice, and this is a bit repetitive here, I admit. He's not making an excuse, right? Some people have read this verse, oh, it's sin that's doing the sin.

Not me. I must be okay. It really wasn't me. The devil made me do it. Sin made me do it. That's not Paul's point.

He simply says, I do it. He owns his sin. He grieves his sin. He hates his sin. He repents of his sin. And nowhere in Scripture does Paul minimize his personal responsibility. And here's the truth. The Bible never allows us to blame someone else.

When we sin, we sin. We are accountable. It's not our parents. It's not our brother or sister.

[39:39] It's not my boss. It's not my wife. It's not my husband. It's not my kids. My sin is my sin. So please never believe that Paul is shifting blame.

Paul is identifying the enemy. And here's the truth. There's two realities that exist at the same time. And I'd be lying to you if I told you that this was one of the great this wasn't one of the great mysteries of the Christian life.

We know that the believer has been made new. You belong to Christ. You have a new heart, new desires, a renewed spirit, the Holy Spirit within you. That is your true identity. And yet the flesh has not been eradicated.

Indwelling sin remains. There's still an enemy within the walls. And this explains why the battle continues. Not because Christ has failed.

Not because your salvation failed. Because you haven't been glorified yet. You see the Christian life is a life of dependence.

[40:51] Notice where Paul has brought us. Paul through this passage has dismantled every reason we might have for trusting ourselves.

My flesh? No confidence. My determination? You don't have enough. What about my discipline? It's helpful, but it's insufficient.

What about my promises? Man, they're weak. What about my willpower? It's limited. Everything Paul said leaves us standing in one place.

We can't do it without Jesus. We can't do it without Jesus. And that's exactly where Paul wants us to be.

Because before we move into Romans 8, Paul wants us to appreciate the power of the Holy Spirit until we've stopped. We will never appreciate the power of the Holy Spirit until we stop believing that you and I can sanctify ourselves.

[41:59] Is there any lifeguards here? How many people have ever taken a lifeguard course? There's got to be someone. All right, we've got a couple of honest people. Thank you very much. One of the first things you learn while being a lifeguard is when someone is drowning, how do you approach the person?

You put your arms around them? You let them grab onto you? No, right. You come in with your feet. And if because they're splashing and spraying and they just want to grab onto you. What happens is when they grab onto you, you can't swim. You actually come up with your feet. This is how I learned to do it when I was young. Maybe the rules have changed. But you came in with your feet because if they're out of control, you can smack them with your foot. Just basically kick them to get them to calm down. Now, so one of the hardest people for a lifeguard to rescue is someone who's wildly trying to save themselves, right?

They're thrashing. They're grabbing. They're fighting. They're just out of control because their fear of drowning. There's even stories of people dragging the supposed rescuer down.

[43:07] This is exactly what it's supposed to be spiritually. See, only when the person stops relying on their own frantic efforts to save themselves can the rescuer save them.

You with me? Only when they settle down and let the rescuer rescue them can they be saved. You see, spiritually speaking, many Christians spend years trying to save themselves from sins Christ has already broken the dominion of. They keep reaching for more self-discipline, more resolve, more determination.

I got to figure out more ways to love God. Instead of truly learning to depend on Jesus. And God often allows us to discover the weakness of our own strength until we finally become to Him in rest. Well, let me just speak to you as a pastor for a moment. Maybe you have been fighting the same sin for years. Could be anxiety.

[44:23] Could be pornography. Could be anger. Could be the desire not to forgive. There's this bitterness. And you don't want it. You don't want any of those things in your life. But you keep promising right after the sin.

Oh, I feel so bad. God, this is the last time. I swear. Right? And you've meant it. You've been sincere. You're broken. You're crying.

I don't want that. But yet, you find yourself there again. Sometimes minutes. Sometimes days. Sometimes months. But you find yourself breaking that promise before God. I want you to hear this. Paul's words here are not meant to crush you.

They're not meant to crush you. Paul's words here are meant to free you. He wants to free you from the thrashing. He wants to free you from just trying to grab onto everything so you think it will save you.

[45:28] You see, the answer is never found in becoming stronger.

The answer begins with admitting that you are weaker than you ever imagined. You see, this isn't defeat. This is the beginning of Christian maturity.

One of the marks of growing holiness is not increasing confidence in yourself. It is an ever-increasing confidence in Christ. The Apostle Paul wasn't becoming pessimistic about himself. He was becoming realistic. And one of the ways you see this is the change in your prayer life. When you're immature, you tend to pray for things for you. When you begin to mature, your prayers are about adoring the God above.

Lord, thank you. Thank you for this life. Thank you for my job, my family, whatever those issues that might have been there.

[46:32] God has them all there for a purpose. See, Paul is realistic. He knew he could not trust himself and he learned to trust Christ all the more.

So this morning, if I can leave you with one final concluding thought. It's as I said, these verses were written to free us, not discourage us.

Because one of the greatest obstacles to spiritual growth is the belief that if we just try a little harder, then we'll eventually overcome sin on our own. Paul has clearly said, nope, not going to happen.

Because the flesh cannot produce what only the Spirit of God can produce. And this is humbling. But it's liberating.

Because once you stop expecting the flesh to accomplish what it never could, you stop placing your confidence in yourself.

[47:43] It's interesting, as we read these epistles of Paul over years and years of ministry, he actually becomes less impressed with himself.

He doesn't become more self-confident. He becomes more Christ-confident. He knows that every victory over sin is ultimately the work of God's grace.

Perhaps you're here and you're discouraged this week. Maybe you've been discouraged for the month or even the year. Perhaps you've fought the same temptation. Perhaps you've failed in ways that have left you, wondering if you'll ever change.

I don't want you to leave here believing the answer is simply to try harder, to knowing more. I want you to leave here knowing that God is teaching you something far deeper.

He's teaching you that apart from Christ, you can do nothing. And that's glorious news, my friends. Because the Christian life has never been about becoming strong enough for God.

[48:54] That's the mistake I made. When I was young, I went to this Christian school for my first year of college, and I saw so many different mature people, and I wanted to be like them.

And I thought the answer was pursuit, pursuit, pursuit. And what it did, it turned me into a legalist, because I wanted the laws in order to follow. Just tell me what to do.

Tell me not what to do. And I will become mature. Didn't work that way. God had to take me through what he needed to take me through to turn me into the man that he wanted.

See, the great irony of the Christian life is this. The strongest Christians are not those who have the greatest confidence in themselves.

They're those who have the least confidence in themselves and the greatest confidence in Christ.

So next week, we look at the struggle, the struggle that reaches its climax.

[49:53] Climax, Paul will ask the question that every believer has asked, who will then deliver me from this body of death? And the answer won't be, hey, your determination.

Man, you're going to get disciplined. If you have real willpower, you'll make it. No, his answer is, thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. And from there, Paul will lead us into one of the greatest chapters in all of Scripture, Romans 8, where we will discover that the victory we cannot produce in the flesh is supplied by the power of the Holy Spirit.

So my prayer for you is don't leave this place trusting more on yourself. Leave here trusting Jesus more, for where your strength ends, his grace is only the beginning.

Let us pray. Father, these are hard lessons, and the reality is there's a reason that Paul repeats himself is because we need to hear it again and again and again because it's so easy to want to depend in the flesh, to do it on ourselves.

Somehow we've been taught that is the noble thing to do, or we've bought the world's lie. You can do it. Don't be weak. Be strong, man. Deal with it.

[51:17] Get disciplined. Can't you be more determined? Father, we thank you for your grace. I think everyone here recognizes the cycle, the pattern, whether it's an ongoing pattern today or it was last year, or for some, praise the Lord, maybe 30, 40 years ago.

And now we can just thank you for your word, Lord Jesus, for the grace that you have given us that has allowed us to overcome the power of the evil one, that we're not losing our temper.

We're not giving in to fear and anxiety. We're not giving in to the lies of this world, which tells us that we're number one.

We don't need to, because we have a great God that loves us. A God that loves us because he has a great love.

And he has chosen to reveal that great love to us so we, too, can become children of the most high God.

[52:37] So, Father, I pray you would use this sermon just to even prepare our hearts for this communion.

This communion table is based on having a right vertical relationship with you. It's about those who know you and, by extension, love this church, love one another.

And it's seen in their actions and their words and their thoughts that they serve one another in this church. And I pray that love would continue to grow as we learn to mature and be used in greater service for your glory.

So, Lord Jesus, we thank you for the great God that you are. In your most holy and precious name, amen.