

Real Change from the Inside Out

Ephesians 4:20-24

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I think it's a very well verified fact of life that most people find change hard. In fact, some people find change so hard that, I think, they sort of have as their motto in life the words of the Duke of Cambridge back in the late 1800s who said this, "Any change, at any time, for any reason is to be deplored." While we may not want certain things to change, and we find those things hard to face if they do change, when it comes to ourselves and other people we usually desperately want change. Sometimes that change has to do with our physical appearance.

Now, perhaps you've heard the story of the man who was from the mountains of Tennessee, found himself for the first time in a large city standing in front, for the very first time of an elevator in a large building there and he watched with fascination as an old grizzle woman hobbled on the elevator and the doors closed and just a couple of minutes later the doors opened and off walked a young attractive woman. The man leaned over and whispered to his youngest son, "Billy, go get your mother."

But most of our energy, even when it comes to changing physical appearance, isn't about changing other people, it's about changing our own appearance. It's really amazing how much of a focus of the culture this has become. Americans spend a huge amount of money every year on surgeries to change how they look. The latest statistics that I could find were in 2003, nearly 10 million Americans had some form of cosmetic surgery at a price tag of a whopping 9.4 billion dollars. And that number continues to grow. We're obsessed with physical appearance. Take, for example, the average number of people in America who are on a diet at any given time. Now, not all of them are on a diet for appearance, sometimes it's for health. But the average number of American adults at any given time on a diet is about 71 million people or about a third of the adult population that's walking around hungry.

Not only do people wish that they could change their physical appearance, but most wish that they could also change something more to the core of who they are. Something about the person they are. Maybe it's some habit, like outbursts of anger, or lying, or lust. Maybe it's some destructive pattern like the way they relate to others, the way they talk, the conversations they have. Many would love to improve the quality of their spiritual lives. And people attempt to make those changes. They attempt to accomplish real change in a variety of ways and there really are an endless number of ways people attempt this. But as I got to thinking about it this week, it occurred to me that, in our culture, there are three approaches to pursuing real change that sort of stand out.

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If you had to analyze the American culture, you would say these three methodologies are how people in our world pursue real change. Number one is self- help. Self- help. Just go to your local Barnes & Noble and you'll find a huge section of books entitled self-help. It's a sort of potpourri of advice on how to produce lasting change in your life. This is a multi-billion dollar a year industry in the U.S. Self-help guru Tony Robbins has built an 80 million dollar/year empire, preying on the desire that people have for real change in their lives. Wikipedia reports that the research firm Market Data estimated the self- improvement market, this sort of self- help market in the U.S., was worth more than nine billion dollars in 2006 and the same firm projected that it would become an 11 billion dollar industry last year and, of course, all the data isn't yet in. So people pursue real change through the avenue of self-help through some book, some seminar, some guru who's going to help them make a change as they have made changes.

The second, sort of, common approach in our culture to real change is pharmaceutical drugs. This has become an increasingly popular way to pursue change. Over the ten year period ending in 2006, so from 1996 to 2006, psychotropic drug use (that's drugs prescribed for mental health use) increased 73% among adults and 50% among children. That means, folks, that one in ten adults and one in twenty children reported using prescription drugs for mental health in 2006. Now, don't misunderstand me, there is a time and a place for those things. They can be helpful and, sort of, in adjusting behavior and helping someone out of the difficulty they've gotten in, but understand this, they never have, never will, produce real change and many people pursue them for that purpose.

There's a third approach for real change and that is counselors, psychologist and psychiatrists. This is also a very common approach in our culture. About 33% of Americans have seen a psychologist or a psychiatrist. This also accounts, by the way, for the popularity. Those who haven't been, sixty something percent who haven't seen a psychologist or psychiatrist, look for the pop psychologist. Explains the popularity of a guy like Dr. Phil McGraw better known as Dr. Phil who, by the way, is not licensed to practice psychology in any state in the country. It's pretty obvious.

Now, those are probably the three primary ways that people today try to change themselves; Self-help, pharmaceutical drugs or some kind of secular counseling. And you know what? Sometimes, there can be some advantage gained through those things. Some change through each of those means is possible. People can modify their external behavior. In fact, if the reward is high enough or the penalty is high enough, you do change your behavior. There are certain things that perhaps you do in front of your family that you would never consider doing out in public because the cost is too high. And so you can, through various means, modify your behavior.

You can even modify certain thought patterns. You can just learn to think differently, to sort of change a habit of thinking. But, according to both human experience and the clear teaching of Scripture, I can guarantee you this: Not one person can bring about real heart change from the

inside out using any of those methods whatsoever. And without change at the heart level, all efforts at real change are absolutely futile.

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God puts it like this. Listen to Jeremiah 13:23. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then, you can do good who are accustomed to doing evil.” In other words, it’s impossible. The color of our skin is dictated by our genes and we can do nothing to change it. The configuration of the leopard’s spots is part of the genetic code written into who he is and he can do nothing about it. The point is this. We cannot change our nature and that means that we cannot make moral choices that conflict with what we are by nature. We cannot produce in ourselves real change. When it comes to what you can do or I can do, there is no hope of change at the heart level whatsoever. And that’s where the message of the gospel comes in. That’s why it’s good news. Because the gospel comes along and it says that Christ can change us. That Christ can release us from the slavery to the people that we are, the sin that enslaves us and He can set us free from that and make real change possible.

Jesus Himself, you remember, quoted from Isaiah’s prophecy in His message in His hometown of Nazareth. Got Himself in trouble for doing it. Luke 4:18. He says, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel. He has sent Me.” Jesus said. “To proclaim release to the captives, to set free those who are oppressed.” He was talking about spiritual captivity, spiritual oppression. Being bound in the slavery of our sin, under the curse of the law and He says, “I came to declare freedom.” Because of Jesus Christ, folks, real change is possible. In fact, you can change and you can change, not merely in your behavior, not merely in some pattern of thinking, but at the deepest level of who you are at the heart level. And that heart level change will produce radical changes in how you think and how you act and how you speak and how you live. That’s the message Paul gives us in Ephesians 4 as we turn there today.

Ephesians 4. You remember, in verses 17-19, we’ve noted how we used to live and how the Gentiles still live, how pagans live. And Paul says, “No longer walk like that.” And in verses 20-24, Paul takes us to this change that has already happened and how we can continue to see that change occur in our lives. A very foundational passage. Let me read it for you. Ephesians 4:20-24. After He rehearses all that we use to be and to do, He says in verse 20, “But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.” The theme of these verses is the reality and necessity of a changed life. If you are a true Christian, you have been taught, Paul says, not to live like the person you use to be, but instead you have learned to live instead like the new person that you are in Christ.

In verses 17 to 19, he’s told us how we should no longer live. We shouldn’t live as the pagans live, as we use to live. In verses 20-24, he tells us why that’s true and how we can see that

change occur in theory. And in verses 25-32, he tells us how that lives out in practice. What that change looks like in real life. Now, I can't emphasize enough to you that if you want to see real change in your life from the inside out, there are no verses anywhere in the Bible that are more important to you to understand than these five verses. Because here we learn why real change is not only possible but is a necessity for every Christian. And we learn how real change actually happens. There are in this text several amazing insights into this matter of real change and I want us to begin today to look at them together.

The first insight that Paul gives us here we could call the reality of real change. Look at verse 20. "But you did not learn Christ in this way." As we've studied verses 17-19, the outlook has been pretty bleak hasn't it. I mean when we see the life of unregenerate people described, it's a desert with absolutely no end, no relief, no hope. But into that desert and darkness, breaks hope and it comes with those little words that begin verse 20, but you. This is a contrast with the patterns of thinking and living that we studied in the previous verses. But, you. This means that Christians can be different. In fact, Christians are different than pagans. But, you aren't like that. You didn't learn to live like that.

One of my favorite passages that makes this change that has happened to us in the past so obvious is 1 Corinthians 6. Turn there with me for just a moment, 1 Corinthians 6. Paul is talking to the Corinthians about what they ought to do. Particularly he's talking about lawsuits in the context. And on the heels of that, he gives them a rationale; he gives them a reason, a motive. 1 Corinthians 6:9. Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? People whose lives are characterized by a pattern of unrighteousness don't belong to Christ. They're not in the kingdom of Christ. They're not going to be there permanently. They're not there now and they never will be there apart from grace. "Do not be deceived [verse 9] neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, [and those two words go together. They're the opposite pairs in a homosexual relationship.] nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." If your pattern of life is characterized by any of those things, and by the way, that's not a complete list, that's just a sampling. If your life is characterized by unrighteousness, then you will not inherit the kingdom. You're not going to be there. But I love verse 11. "Such were some of you."

In the Corinthian church, there were people from all of those categories. "Such were some of you." But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were set apart to God. You were justified. You were declared righteous in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the spirit...and in the spirit of our God. You know what Paul is saying? Real change, massive life shattering change has already happened to you if you're a Christian. It's already a reality. Although you may not be what you ought to be at this point, and you may not be what you want to be, by the grace of God, you are not what you used to be. There was a point when radical change occurred.

There's great hope for anyone who will come to Jesus Christ. There's great hope in this little expression, "but you." If we were to retrace our steps back to the beginning of the church in

Ephesus, people who are receiving this letter, we would find that in that church there were people from the absolute worst of backgrounds. Let me just give you a couple of examples. There were people in the Ephesian church sitting there, hearing this letter read to them, written by the apostle Paul, who had a background in pagan idolatry. And in the city of Ephesus, that meant that they had gone regularly and participated in ritual prostitution in the temple of Diana.

There were people sitting in the auditorium who had been immersed in the occult. The book of Acts tells us that in Ephesus, there was a group of people who came to faith in Christ and they were so much into the occult, that when they pulled together after their conversion, all of their books on the magical arts and burned them, the value of those books just from the Christians who were there in the church in Ephesus, was more than 50,000 days pay. And there were many other sins represented there as well. Yet, Christ had delivered those people and now as Paul writes this letter, they are members of the church in Ephesus and they are living differently than they use to live. And if you're in Christ, that's true of you as well.

Listen, I don't care if you're the worst person in the metropolis, if you have the worst heart in the entire world, there is hope for you in these little words: "...but you." There is hope in the good news of Jesus Christ. If you're a Christian here this morning, you know the story. You know the gospel. That God so loved the world that He sent His Son, His Son eternally existing as the second person of the Trinity, came into the world and became also fully man. He was born of a virgin and He grew up like you and I grow up. He lived in a historical place, in a historical time and He grew up as you and I have grown up and He grew through that life in perfect obedience to God. Never once did He break God's law. Always He loved God perfectly. Always, He loved others as He loved Himself.

When He reached the age of 30, He stopped the job of a carpenter and He began a ministry for a little over three years. He taught and He performed miracles to confirm His identity and His Word. And He went about, the writers say, doing good, and He prophesied all through that time that the day was coming when He would die and He would die for a particular purpose. He would lay down His own life and that happened. He went to Jerusalem and the confluence of events in God's providence, Jesus Christ ended up dying on the cross and He died, not for Himself and His own sin, but He died for my sin. To pay the penalty for my sin. To pay the wrath of God that my sins deserved. And then He laid down His life. He voluntarily stopped living. He died well before someone on a cross would have died. They took Him down from the cross, He was dead. His humanity was dead. He was buried in a grave and on the third day, God raised Him from the dead. He spent 40 days further teaching his disciples, showing Himself alive to many people, eating with them and doing various other things. At one point, to more than 500 people. And then after 40 days, He ascended into heaven. And He promised that someday He would come again for His own. That's the gospel. And for everyone who will turn from their sins and believe in Him, Jesus has made some extraordinary promises. This is true for you. If you are willing to turn from your sin and believe in Jesus, He has promised that He will give you

a new heart, a new nature. That He will start you over again. He described it to Nicodemus as it's like being born a second time. It's like becoming a new person.

You now have the capacity and the desire to obey Him. He will forgive all of your sins: past, present and future. He will declare you forever righteous in His presence. You will never stand before God in judgment for your sin and He will make you an heir of heaven in eternity in His presence. That's the good news. That's the gospel. And there is the reality of real change for all who embrace Him as Lord.

Listen, if you're here this morning and you are a Christian, real change has already happened to you. We're going to talk more about that as we flow through this passage. Change is more than possible, it's a reality, and you know it's a reality because if you're a Christian, you've already seen it demonstrated. Listen, the change that happened in the past, there can be ongoing change in your life as well.

Now that brings us to the second insight that Paul gives us about real heart change here, and that's the cause of real change. Look at verses 20-21. "But you did not learn Christ in this way if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus." Real change happened in the past and ongoing real change is possible in the future. How? Well, it doesn't happen through self-help, it doesn't happen through drugs, doesn't happen through pop psychology. Paul tells us how this radical change came. You learned Christ. That is the only way in the universe real change is possible.

Now, Paul uses three unusual expressions here that we have to understand. Notice he says, we have learned Christ, we have heard Him, and the third one is we have been taught by Him. All of those expressions as you can tell are educational expressions. We could put it like this. For us, real change has already happened and it's possible in the future because we went to school with Christ.

One commentator puts it like this, "You have become students of the Messiah, you have listened to Him and been taught in His school." John Calvin summarizes these two verses as teaching received in Christ's school. Here is the reason, folks, that we are not and cannot be the same person that we used to be. It's because we learned Christ. It's because we heard Him. It's because we have been taught in Him.

Now let's look at each of those expressions. Understand the structure here. The first expression, "learned Christ," is a general overarching expression. And the second and third expressions, "You have heard Him" and "have been taught in Him" are further explanations of what it means to learn Christ.

So, let's take it apart then. Let's look at that first general expression, "We learned Christ." Literally, we learned the Messiah. The word Christ, of course, is the Greek word, according to the Old Testament, Hamashiach. We learned the Messiah. Now, that is a very unusual

expression. This is the only time something like this ever appears. In the New Testament, the word learned is used with a lot of different objects. You can learn things, you can learn doctrine, you can learn a lesson, you can learn by example, you can learn from someone, but nowhere else before this statement of Paul, in any Greek literature anywhere, is it ever used of learning a person. Paul invents this expression.

The Greek word for learn is the verb form of a very familiar New Testament word. The word: “disciple.” Disciple. You learned Christ. The implication is that we learned more than facts. The goal is to know Christ both factually and personally. It’s learning as a disciple. Now, I used that word, “disciple” and I use it a lot. We do in Christian circles. But it’s one of those words that I think is sort of vague. You ask the average person what does it mean to be a disciple and they may stumble and stutter a bit in trying to explain it. It’s very simple. The word disciple literally means student. That’s it, student. It means to be a student. It describes someone who has attached himself to a rabbi or a teacher to be taught about everything that matters. Now this is very important that you understand this. To be a Christian then is to sign up to be a student in the school of Jesus the Messiah. Not merely to accumulate knowledge and, sort of as we do in Western culture, stay at a distance from our professor, but, rather, to be with the teacher all the time. To always be in school. And the school is about knowing and pleasing the instructor as much as gaining the knowledge.

Peter O’Brien describes it like this, “Learning Christ means welcoming Him as a living person and being shaped by His teaching.” That’s what it means to be a student of Christ. It means you attach yourself to Christ personally, He is your teacher and you are His student, and you allow your life, by obedience, to be shaped by His teaching.

Now the tense of the Greek word for learn, in the Greek text, implies that at some point already as a decisive action we learned Christ. We were students and the subject was Christ. There was a moment in time when this teacher-student relationship began.

Turn back to Matthew 11. Because it’s interesting, Jesus even preaches the gospel in this sort of expression of becoming His student. In Matthew 11:28, Jesus says, “Come to Me. [This is an invitation to Jesus, Jesus says to the crowd there.] “Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden. [That is, all who are tired and weary of trying to please God on your own, of trying to earn your way into God’s favor, to earn your righteousness before God.] And I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you [and here it is,] and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

In one sense, that teacher-student relationship that we have begun with Jesus extending an invitation and your responding to that invitation. Do you remember when that happened? Do you remember when you responded to the invitation of Jesus to become His student, His disciple? It began with you responding, but that’s not the whole story. Turn over to John 6. Because in

another sense, you would never have responded to the invitation to become Jesus' student had it not been for the work of God.

John 6:44, a very familiar verse, says Jesus says, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws Him and I will raise Him up on the last day." There's God's sovereignty in salvation. Verse 45, "It is written in the prophets and they shall all be taught of God." Now, notice how Jesus explains that. Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. So on the one hand, you hear the invitation of Christ, you respond to that invitation and you become His student. Why did you respond? Well, the answer's here. Because, the Father was teaching you, or in the words of verse 44, He was drawing You. But there was a moment in time when you became a student of Jesus Christ, if you're a Christian. It happened.

You know, it's so important to understand that salvation is learning Christ. I was confused about this for many years. I grew up in the church and I made several professions of faith, I was baptized a couple of times before I really came to genuine faith in Christ and it's when I learned this lesson that salvation is not in a plan, it's not in a program, it's not in a prayer, it's not the result of your own efforts, it's in a person. It's in Jesus Christ. It's through a knowledge of and personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Now, let me define that because, unfortunately, that phrase 'personal relationship' is used in a very sloppy way. Everybody has a relationship with Jesus Christ. He may be only their Judge, their Creator, but they have a relationship. The question is, what is the nature of your relationship to Jesus Christ?

If you cannot honestly say that He is your Teacher and you are His committed student, then you do not have a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. I don't care what kind of a relationship you think you have, if He is not your Teacher and you His committed student, then you're not savingly-related to Jesus Christ. True Christians are students, are disciples of Christ. They are in the school where Christ is the subject and the teacher. That's the general expression. You learned Christ.

Now, Paul further develops that with the two expressions that follow. First of all, notice, he says, we heard Him. This is how we learned Christ. We heard Him. Verse 21, "...if indeed you have heard Him." "If indeed," there doesn't imply any doubt. The ESV probably captures it more accurately when he says, assuming that you have heard. Paul says, "I assume that you have heard." He doesn't mean that the sound waves had bounced off your ear drums. It's not what he's talking about, you heard Him. He means that if you are a Christian, you have really heard.

Six times in the gospel, the gospel writers record Jesus as concluding His message with these words. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Obviously everyone there physically heard His words, but they hadn't really heard it.

In the book of Revelation, Jesus finishes His message to each of the seven churches in Asia Minor, churches in Minor Turkey with these words, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Folks, this is not mere listening. This doesn't mean because you're

sitting there this morning and my words, my voice is loud enough that you really can't get away from it and so the sound waves are bouncing off of your ear drums. That's not what He's talking about here. It's not mere listening. It's not even enjoying. Maybe a few of you are enjoying what I'm saying. That doesn't mean you're really hearing either. Maybe you're understanding it intellectually. That doesn't mean you're hearing it. Listen to Lloyd Jones.

A man who hears Christ is a man who says, 'This is the most important thing in the world. This is everything. This is the truth.' It means that he surrenders himself to it. When a man has heard Christ, Christ and His gospel become the chief things in his life. He is mastered by them. He is governed and controlled by them. He lives to obey Christ.

Paul says, "I am assuming that you have really heard." And what did we really hear? Christ. Now, that could mean that we actually heard Christ speak. You say, "Wait a minute. The people in the church in Ephesus never met Jesus Christ, never heard Him physically speak and we certainly haven't heard Him physically speak. So, what does Paul mean if he's meaning to say that we have heard Christ speak?" Well, he means that Jesus was speaking through him as His apostle.

This is not a new thought. When Jesus sent out the seventy, back in Luke 10, listen to what He said to them. Luke 10:16, He finishes off His speech to them with this, about to send them out to preach. "The one who listens to you, listens to Me. The one who rejects you, rejects Me and he who rejects Me, rejects the One who sent Me." As He sent out the seventy, He said listen, their response to you will be their response to Me and when they're hearing you, they're really hearing Me.

Folks, whenever and wherever the gospel is rightly proclaimed, Christ is speaking. Do you understand that? I'm just a sinful guy standing up here, teaching you the word, but to whatever extent what I say reflects the Word of Christ, whenever the Word of God is being truly spoken, understand that Christ is speaking to you through that word.

In fact, I saw this week in a way I've never seen it before. Look at Romans 10. This verse I had read many, many times, but it's never jumped out at me as it did this week. Romans 10:14, He's just said, "Whoever calls upon the name of Lord will be saved." Verse 14, "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed?" You have to believe in Christ in order to call on Him for salvation. "Then how will they believe in Him whom they have not heard?" Now notice, he doesn't say, how will they believe in Him of whom they have not heard, but how will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how are they going to hear Christ? How will they hear without a preacher? In other words, Christ is in that message speaking through that word to the hearts of those who hear.

Isn't that what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5? He says, "I am an ambassador for Christ." It's as though God were making an appeal through me. He says, "I beg you, on behalf of Christ, be

reconciled to God.” Christ was speaking through Paul. So that may be what he means here. We heard Christ in the sense that we heard Him through His word that came to our hearts.

The Greek construction, “you have heard Him,” could also mean we have heard the truth about Jesus Christ from others. We can’t be absolutely sure which he intends. But, either way, whether Paul means we heard Christ speak through the word of the gospel or whether we heard the message about Christ, either way, Paul is referring to the initial proclamation of the gospel that we heard and responded to.

You remember the time when you really heard for the first time and you responded? “You heard Him,” Paul says. He’s talking about our salvation. We learned Christ. We became His disciples at the moment of salvation. We became His students. That happens when we respond to the gospel. We heard Him, or we heard of Him.

But learning Christ doesn’t stop at the moment of salvation. Notice Paul adds another phrase to explain what it means to learn Christ. Not only does it mean that we heard Him at the moment of salvation, we really heard Him, but we have been taught in Christ, verse 21 says. If the phrase, you have heard Him, refers to salvation, the second phrase refers to ongoing systematic instruction. In other words, we have continued to learn Christ through the ongoing process of systematic instruction and the process of sanctification.

As I mentioned a moment ago, as I teach you the scripture, as much as I am accurate to the Word of God, Christ is in His Word speaking to you. The same thing is true with any faithful teacher. You continue to hear Him. Harold Hoehner writes, “Believers in Christ not only learn Christ at the time they heard the gospel, but they continue to learn Him as they study God’s word and as they are ministered to by gifted people in the body.” Listen, if you’re a Christian, you have learned Christ. That means you heard Him when you first really heard the gospel and responded, and since that time, you have continued to be taught through those who are equipped to teach back in verse 11 of Ephesians 4.

Now notice Paul doesn’t say, “You have been taught by Christ.” He says, “You have been taught in Christ.” Christ is the foundation in which all the teaching is taking place. He’s the atmosphere in which the teaching has occurred. Can I summarize it? I love this. Paul says here that in the school of the Messiah that we’ve all signed up for, if you’re a Christian, you’ve signed up for this, in the school of the Messiah, Jesus is the subject we study, He’s the teacher, and He’s the school.

When I was growing up, I attended several different schools. I went to W.C. Griggs Elementary School, not exactly the bastion of education in south Alabama. Saint Elmo Middle School, also not the bastion. West End High school. But as a Christian, I have also been in the school of Christ and so have you, if you’re a Christian.

As one writer puts it, “When can a school affect as great a change as to liberate us from our former way of living?” The answer is this. When Jesus Christ is the head master, the teaching matter, the method, the curriculum, and the school, then the gift of new life takes the place of a diploma. And when we learn Christ, look back at Ephesians 4:20, we did not learn Him in this way. In other words, we learned that we couldn’t keep thinking and living like the pagan we use to be. Paul ends Ephesians 4:20 with a brief parenthetical comment which is absolutely profound. Look at the end of verse 21. If indeed you have heard Him and been taught in Him just as truth is in Jesus. Christ is the only source of saving truth. You cannot find any truth that will rescue you or produce real change anywhere else. Truth is found only in a historical person, Jesus of Nazareth. He is the truth.

Isn’t that what he claimed, John 14:6. I am the truth. You want real change in your life? Do you want real change from the inside out? You don’t need to pursue every artificial means to produce that heart change. There’s only one person in the universe who can rescue you from what you have become and it is Jesus Christ. That’s the message of His passage.

As we close our time together this morning, Jesus puts this so clearly in John 8. Turn there with me, John 8. I love this passage. Jesus speaks, John 8:30, says that some of the people came to believe that what He was saying was true, came to embrace some of the truth of it, verse 31, so Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My Word, if you remain in My Word, in a pattern of obedience, then you are truly students of Mine and you will know the truth, through my lessons, you’ll come to know the truth and the truth will make you free.” Now the Jews that were there answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been enslaved to anyone.”

I don’t know what they were smokin’ at that point, but that obviously isn’t true. I mean they had been enslaved to everybody. They were under Rome at that exact moment. So, I don’t know exactly what they meant. How is it that you say we will become free? Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.” The slave doesn’t remain in the house forever. The son does remain forever. So if the son of the household declared you free, you will be free, indeed. Free from the slavery of sin. Free from what you have become. Real change is possible.

Folks, don’t look anywhere else for help. But if you’ll come to Christ, He will make you free through the truth that comes only through Him and by Him. Truth is in Jesus and nowhere else. And Christian, Paul’s message to you is don’t keep living like pagans live. You’ve already experienced real change in your life at the moment of salvation. You were made new. Shouldn’t be hard for people to tell that you’re a Christian, should be obvious that you’re different. Not odd, but in an attractive sort of way different. Don’t claim to be a Christian and live the way you use to live. That’s not how you learned Christ. That’s not what you learned in the school of Christ. It’s inconsistent with your teacher and Lord and what you have learned from Him. So

don't live like that. Instead, not only has change happened in the past, but let that processive change continue in your life. You say, "Well, that's great. I agree. I say, amen, but how?" Well, we'll let Paul answer that question for us next week. Let's pray together.

Our Father, it is impossible for us to ever adequately thank you for the gift of Christ. For the truth is in Jesus, in Jesus Christ Your Son. You gave us all the saving truth we need, and He's the only place it exists. Father, we thank You that He is the answer to all of our problems. That He is the only place real change is found. And Father, as believers in Christ, we thank you. Even as we look back, we realize that when we entered into this student-teacher relationship with Jesus Christ, You did change us. You changed us radically and dramatically, even as we'll see in the coming weeks. But Father, we still want to see that more poured out in our lives. We want to see an increasing pattern of obedience to Christ. Teach us how. Father, I pray for the person here this morning who's never entered into that relationship with Christ. Their only relationship with Christ, right now, is from a distance and He honestly is only their creator and their sustainer and their judge. Father, I pray that today would be the day when they would respond to His invitation, "Come unto Me all you that are weak and heavy laden and I will give you rest for your souls." Father, I pray that today would be the day in the lives of some here for the glory of Your Son and His kingdom we pray. Amen.