

Convictional and Conscience Driven Faith

I. Introduction

We have been walking through the process of how to move from the original interpretation of the text, to apply the text to our lives today. The goal for this course is to get to the point where we can helpfully teach or edify someone else with the text. The last two weeks we talked about how to do Theological Reflection to come to the Timeless Gospel Principles of the text. This is important for several reasons, but largely because we need a principle we can walk in by faith if we are going to please God. We need the gospel motivating our lives.

But before we move on to how to teach the text and communicate it to others, we have to make sure we understand how to live out the text in our own lives. We can't be hypocrites. If we are going to teach the text, we first have to internalize it for ourselves. If we don't know how to apply the text to ourselves, how will we be able to help anyone else with it?

So how does the truth transform? How does God intend Timeless Gospel Principles to reshape our lives into the image of Christ?

II. Ephesians 4:17-24 on how the Truth Transforms

One of the reasons we picked Ephesians 4:17-24 as the key text for this course is how clear it is on how transformation happens. What does this text teach us?

A. The goal is a completely new walk, a new and transformed way of life

Paul makes clear in this passage that he isn't just talking about some external changes, but a completely new way of life. He calls this our 'walk' and our 'manner of life' in this text. These terms communicates a whole direction, a change in every aspect of our everyday lives. Paul argues that this new way of life in righteousness and holiness like Jesus is what we were actually created for!

B. A new identity, purpose, and walk (manner of life) comes through the **truth**

All throughout this text Paul talks about having 'futile minds,' being 'deceived,' 'ignorance,' and being in the 'dark' as the problem, and being 'renewed in the spirit of your minds,' 'learning' and being 'taught,' and the 'truth' as the solution. This text is also sandwiched before and after with 'speaking the truth.'

- C. A self-indulgent life flows from a darkened and purposeless mind that the ignorance of a hard heart produces

Ephesians 4:17-19

So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

People don't first and foremost have an intellectual problem with God. Ultimately, their ignorance is a willful rejection of God. By choosing not to submit to God, people reject His wisdom and end up in darkness, not able to see true beauty and goodness. That makes their minds futile, unable to think properly because they have rejected real truth. And so, people's hearts become callous, hardened to what is truly good and blinded and enslaved to their own passions and desires. Ultimately, those who reject God's truth are excluded from the life of God. Without any external perspective of what is beautiful and good, we become the worst versions of ourselves, slaves to self and unable to see and appreciate true beauty and wisdom.

- D. But a righteous and holy life flows from a renewed mind that puts off corrupting deceitful desires through truth

Ephesians 4:20-24

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.

To live as God designed us, we must put off our old life, like old clothes. That old self was corrupted by deceitful desires. That means our desires trick us into living for the physical and immediate, rather than the spiritual and eternal. But putting on Christ means being renewed in the Spirit of the mind, meaning the Spirit renews our thinking and helps us to see by faith the goodness of God's way. We embrace our identity and purpose as created to represent God. We become like Jesus, living holy and righteous lives **which comes from the truth.**

- E. Other texts that show the truth changes us

- i. All sin is believing a lie for instant gratification

Table Discussion: How did the Serpent tempt Eve to eat the fruit in Genesis 3:1-7? What three aspects appealed to her about it? What does that teach us about temptation?

Eve fell into temptation when she decided what was best for herself and what looked good to her rather than trusting God knew what was best.

Sin is deceitful and so we need encouragement to keep trusting Christ.

Hebrews 3:12-13, 19

Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

Right living fundamentally comes back to faith, believing and trusting God way is best. We are saved by faith and we grow by faith.

Galatians 3:2-3

This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

ii. So the truth is what transforms us

We are sanctified by the truth.

John 17:17

Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

We demolish strongholds by tearing down speculation with the truth.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ...

The Word of God is our only weapon.

Ephesians 6:17

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

We are transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Romans 12:2

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

The church is the pillar and support of the truth.

1 Timothy 3:15

...but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.

iii. The Spirit does the work

The Spirit is **the Spirit of truth**, whose abiding in us teaches as we let God's Word abide in us.

1 John 2:27

As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

John 14:17; 15:7

...that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

iv. The Gospel has the power

The power to transform comes from the gospel.

Romans 1:16-17

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith."

1 Thessalonians 1:5

...for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

III. Principles form Convictions

Convictions are formed when we see God's values, priorities, and heart in the Word which we then embrace by faith. When we see something in the text for ourselves, then we need to own it.

A. Convictions come from **clarity** in the Word

And so once we have studied and have understood the meaning of a text, and the Timeless Gospel Principles that come from it, what do we do? We need to get **clarity around that principle and form convictions around it** so we can live with a clear conscience by faith. If we don't have clarity, we will be easily deceived. Our goal is for God's values to drive us in our everyday life, that we would actually live like Christ.

Convictions come from clarity in the Word. For example, we all know gossip is wrong. Hopefully, we all have a conviction that we shouldn't gossip. But do all of us have a clear definition of gossip? If I can't clearly define gossip, how will I know if I am doing it? How will I ever have the boldness when someone is gossiping to me to say, "No, I shouldn't listen and participate in this" if I can't define clearly what gossip is? When is it ok to talk about someone else's sin?

But if I study the Word about gossip, and I find clear Timeless Gospel Principles about it, then I will have a grid to evaluate speech. For example one definition is: “the sin of gossip is bearing bad news behind someone’s back out of a bad heart.” This definition then gives us three key questions to ask about speech. 1) Is this something bad about someone. If so, 2) Would I share this same story in the same way if the person was here? If not, why not? And 3) Why am I sharing this? Is it for the person’s ultimate good? Do you see how a clear definition helps us to evaluate whether something is right or wrong? -

Proverbs 10:19; 11:13; 18:8

When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, But he who restrains his lips is wise.

He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is trustworthy conceals a matter.

The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels, and they go down into the innermost parts of the body.

1 Timothy 5:13

At the same time they also learn to be idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention.

Ephesians 4:29

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

Or, if we were studying Luke 16, we would come up with a clear Timeless Gospel Principle that everything we have is God’s and we are merely stewards of it. That would lead us to a conviction that we should never be selfish with our money. We don’t have the right to just do whatever we want with our money, because God will hold us responsible for how we steward *His money*. We then need to live out that conviction by faith in our daily lives. Every dime I spend I have to spend in faith. That doesn’t mean you can’t have any comfort, just that the comfort we do have is to be refreshed to serve the Lord and to enjoy of Him.

B. Convictions give the opportunity to **live by faith**

What do you take faith in if you don’t have clear and strong convictions?

Table Exercise: What conviction should you form from 1 John 3:17?

1 John 3:17

But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?

You would never give up your car to a fellow believer that needed it more than you unless you had a strong conviction that God calls us to care for our brothers and sisters like ourselves. This is not an option. It’s a must for all believers. And now that you have that conviction, you have an opportunity to live it out by faith.

Now this is a good example, because while we should have a strong conviction around 1 John 3:17, that doesn’t mean it’s the only verse in the Bible on this topic. There are other verses that we need to hold in tension with this truth.

Table Exercise: Now read 1 Timothy 5:9-13 and think through what other principles might be in tension with 1 John 3:17?

Epaphroditus took a risk for the gospel, because he believed it was worth it.

Philippians 2:30

...because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.

You would never go be a missionary in the jungle unless you had a strong conviction that God desires people from every tongue, tribe, and language to be saved. -

Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

The more clear convictions you have from the Word, the more opportunities to live by faith. The truth compels us, love constrains us.

1 Corinthians 9:16

For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.

2 Corinthians 5:14

For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died...

C. Convictions give us **boldness and stability**

The truth makes us stable and not tossed to and fro by our emotions and whims.

Ephesians 4:14

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming...

Elders need to be sober-minded, everyone should be. That means living principled lives of convictions by faith. Why do we do what we do? Is it our flesh driving us? Or principles from God's Word.

1 Timothy 3:2

An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach...

Titus 1:8; 2:2, 5

...but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled...

Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance.

...to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.

Meditating on the Word makes you like a massive oak tree in the desert.

Psalm 1:2

But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.

For the sake of conscience you will suffer unjustly.

1 Peter 2:19

For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.

Paul called Timothy to gospel strength and conviction.

2 Timothy 1:7-8; 2:1

For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God...

You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Integrity is living out your convictions with a pure heart, good conscience, and unhypocritical faith.

1 Timothy 1:5

But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

IV. Convictions inform the Conscience

A. The importance of the conscience

Becoming a Christian involves a commitment (a pledge) to live with a clean conscience by faith.

1 Peter 3:21

Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you— not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience— through the resurrection of Jesus Christ...

B. What is the conscience?

- The conscience will accuse or defend you.

Romans 2:15

...in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them...

- The conscience isn't always correct.

Corinthians 8:7

However not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

- But we shouldn't violate our conscience because we want it to be sensitive –
- Guilt is actually good for us because it tells us we aren't going where we want to go. It tells us we aren't living consistently with our convictions.

C. How do we instruct and live in light of the conscience?

Table Discussion: In this passage does a person with a weak conscience think it's ok or not to eat meat sacrificed to idols? What is a weak conscience according to 1 Corinthians 8?

- The conscience can be weak. That means it can be misaligned with the Word. It's not always clear which perspective is the weak one.

Corinthians 8:7, 10

However not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols?

- The conscience can be seared and defiled. That means it can be insensitive to God's Word.

Timothy 4:2

...by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron...

Titus 1:15

To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled.

- The conscience is individual. That means we bear with each other and aim for each other's faith.

Corinthians 8:13; 10:29

Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.

I mean not your own conscience, but the other man's; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience?

- The goal is for people to live with by their conscience with integrity, with a consistency between what they believe and how they live.

Corinthians 1:12

For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.

- Therefore, the goal is always to *persuade* people of the truth so they can live it out with a clean conscience.

Corinthians 4:2; 5:11

...but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences.

Convictions can be lived out by faith with a clear conscience. The goal is to have a clear conscience that is *sensitive* to God's Word.

V. The Goal is convictional and conscience driven faith

A. We should do *everything* from **faith** because humble dependence is at the heart of the Christian life

Faith is what pleases God, and anything that doesn't come from faith is sin!

Hebrews 11:1-4

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

Romans 14:23

But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.

Faith is the method God uses to save and grow His people, because faith is what gives Him all the **glory** as ultimate giver.

Ephesians 2:8-10

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

B. So biblical ministry seeks to build **faith**

The goal is the obedience that comes from faith. If Paul has to qualify and say the "obedience of faith," then not all obedience is from faith.

Romans 1:5

...through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake...

Hearing and understanding Scripture is at the heart of faith.

Romans 10:17

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

VI. Discussion Questions - Work through the Homework

1. What convictions should you form from Ephesians 4:17-24? What gospel motives from the text should drive you to live in light of those convictions?
2. Think carefully about what Ephesians 4:17-24 teaches us about truth, lies, and transformation. According to Ephesians 4:17-24, how does the truth transform us?
 - a. What does 'the old self which is being corrupted by deceitful desires' teach us about how the truth changes us?
 - b. What does 'ignorance that is in them because of the hardness of their heart' teach about how our minds and hearts are connected?
 - c. What does being 'callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity' teach about our hearts and desires?
 - d. What does 'being renewed in the spirit of your mind' teach about where change comes from?
 - e. What does 'the new self which has been created in righteousness and holiness OF THE TRUTH' teach us about the connection between truth and righteousness/holiness?