

The Power to Change, Part 11

To the Point

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Preamble

Hi, I am John from Willows, and thank you for joining me for today's devotion on this Tuesday, the 29th of September, 2026. Today I am wrapping up this series — now in its 11th instalment — titled “The Power to Change.” Our web site will have two PDF links: today's devotion, and then a separate PDF consisting of all the instalments in one file.

Introduction

I have titled today's devotion “To the Point”, as I want us to look at what the point of all this change is, because it is easy to look at it from a distance and see little difference between these devotions and a bunch of self-help articles.

Before we continue, however, a quick prayer.

*Father God, thank You for the gift of Your Son, Jesus, Who is the only Way, Truth, and Life, and also that You sent the Holy Spirit, to guide us into all the truth. Please speak to us now through this devotion, and may Your guidance be all that it contains.
Amen.*

Devotion

What does this power to change achieve? What *is* the point? In Mark 12:30 Jesus says “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” In the next verse Jesus says “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”

The first aspect is loving God, followed by loving ourselves and our neighbour. Read Mark 12 for the context, but the point here is that these are *commands* — things which God Himself tells us *have* to be done. We are given free will — whether or not to keep God's commandments — but we don't get to choose the consequences. So actually our freedom is to choose the consequences, but the point is that our focus is to be Christ, not the consequences. In John 14:15 Jesus says “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”, but that is not an isolated verse; immediately following it Jesus says “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you for ever — the Spirit of truth.” [NIV] So we see that it is in the context of keeping Jesus's commandments out of our love for Him that Jesus speaks of sending the Holy Spirit.

The power to change is granted us by God's Spirit, and we are to love The Lord with *all* of our heart, our soul, our mind, and our strength. In addition, we need to love ourselves, and then our neighbour *in the same way*.

The first devotion of this series was simply titled "Sin". It is the original problem, it is what separates us from God, and we cannot solve it.

Romans 10:9–13 and Ephesians 2:8–9 are the big sections about coming to salvation, and yes, it *is* "with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved", but that speaks only to *our* part of the *how* aspect of salvation. It does not at all address what follows. There is one very important point a myopic focus on those few verses will miss: repentance.

I said that the original problem is sin, and that we cannot solve it. This is not a popular teaching, but it remains the truth, popular or not: we need to *repent* of our sin. That means we need to stop doing it. Are we perfect? No, of course not. Can we attain to salvation by our own means? No, of course not. Can we depend upon God to give us power to live holy lives? I believe we can, but it does require on-going submission to Him. Consider what Jesus said in Luke 9:23, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

So now we have that we are saved through grace (not works), by belief and confession, and that we then need to lay down our lives daily, and follow Christ. That all speaks to our individual salvation. Now you may ask why we still have to be here; why we are not translated into glory upon accepting salvation; why we continue to struggle here. The answer is in the last few verses of Matthew, where Christ gives the Great Commission. We are to be His *witnesses* everywhere, and from this there flows a whole lot more.

In John 13:35 Jesus says, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." There it is! That is how we will bear witness to the world: the love we have for one another.

Why is this so important? How come this is the core of our witness? It is very simple: *we* are the proof of the transforming power of Christ. We can argue all we like to try to prove Christianity intellectually, but at the end of the day it is exactly as per the above quotes from Romans 10 and from Ephesians 2; the clincher remains how people will *know*, and *that* is by the love that we have for one another.

That love is an expression of a changed life — in fact, *is* an expression of *life*!

Conclusion

While the *power* to change comes from God Himself, *we* are the ones changing, and there are two points I wish to make here. Firstly, as with coming to faith, we have a choice, and the choice comes with consequences which we cannot choose. Secondly, this change requires stopping what is wrong and doing what is right.

2 Corinthians 5 has a few very well known verses; think of "...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." Another is "...we walk by faith, not by sight." That second one is in the same paragraph which ends with these words: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due to us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."

[NIV]. That is far more sobering, and note that it was written to Christians. So yes, even though we are saved, we have things to do, and they have consequences.

When our lives make our words a lie, why are we surprised that our words do not convince the unsaved?

To help with this, read Ephesians chapters 4, 5, and 6 in a single sitting, ignoring headings and chapter and verse demarcations. Read it as a unit, so that you can follow the flow of the argument. That will not only help you to see what the point of it is, but will also show you the (very important) context of the sections speaking about family relationships and about slavery.

While you may wish to read a paraphrase to get the general idea (possibly “The Message”, or “The Living Bible”), you will miss a lot, including anything that the person(s) doing the paraphrase left out or did not even see. A good on-line resource for this is <https://biblegateway.com>, where you can choose from various Bibles and have more than one open in parallel for easy comparison.

So much for the mechanics! The reason I recommend reading Ephesians chapters four through six is that it addresses both *why* and *how* regarding the changes we are to make. If you want to know more, then reading Galatians, Philippians, and Colossians is a good place to start. Each is both easier to read and shorter than heavier books such as Corinthians, Romans, or Hebrews, for example.

So the point of living changed lives is that, having come to salvation, our lives may prove the Gospel message.

Let us pray.

Dear Lord God, thank You for giving us Your Son so that we may live. Help us to live our lives to the full, so that the love we have for one another may prove Your power in us. Amen.

General Bible Resources

[Most of the original language information (including Strong’s concordance) is via the Bible Hub site.]

This list is alive in that I update it as I go along — I just don’t update all the instances of it, so see my latest devotion has the then-current one. At some point I’ll probably put it on the web somewhere and update that, but for now this is it. Also note that I don’t check each link for its continued existence... .

There are some points in these resources where you (and I) may think differently. Just don’t throw the baby out with the bath water — consider what is said, read widely in The Word, and pray to God that He would keep you from heresy as you continue in your study of His Word. Though I find the following resources useful in many ways, *each* has its points where at the very least I go, ‘Mmm. Not so sure about that. I need to look into that more deeply.’

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+1%3A1&version=ESVUK> is a brilliant collection of Bible translations. I tend to use the ESV-UK version: a solid translation in English.

<https://biblehub.com> is an enormous collection of resources. They have commentaries, concordances, Bible dictionaries, and more. Unless otherwise specified, this is where I get the information on the original languages. They have of late been encouraging people not to use ad blockers.

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/> packages of the same resources as biblehub.com, but has a completely different approach. They are also (currently) free.

<https://www.stepbible.org/> is an incredible resource if you want to look at the original language. When you use it on a PC and you hover over certain links you get more information without having to click.

<https://www.thebibleunpacked.net> is a rather unusual set of resources. At its core is a free book exploring core concepts of Christianity, but the book is available in seven editions. The smallest is just four 'pages' (each the size of a credit card) while the largest is 2,424 pages of A4 material. The two main areas are 'What to Know' and 'What to Do', which is an excellent balance. You can get an overview of the structure and topics at <https://www.thebibleunpacked.net/whats-inside>.

<https://www.preceptaustin.org/> is an enormous resource of commentaries by Dr. Bruce Hurt, a medical doctor. His work includes copious references, easing further study.

<https://soniclight.com/constable/> is the official site of the Bible commentary of theologian Dr. Thomas Constable, where that material is freely available.

<https://www.gotquestions.org> intends to provide answers to common questions about The Bible. While there is a core doctrinal point (predestination) on which I differ, there are many insightful answers.

These should be sufficient to get you going, but a word of warning: many 'fringe' sites (and some sects) go to great lengths to make their public / introductory material seem completely main-stream, so you really need to be on your guard.