

Hope For Holiness
Ephesians 4:17-32
By Phillip G. Kayser

My Dad told me a story about a friend of his in Ethiopia that had trained a monkey to chase away flies while he was sleeping. They lived in Tsetse Fly country, and there was a constant danger of coming down with sleeping sickness if those flies bit you. So he was pretty proud of this accomplishment. And for the most part, the monkey did a great job. During nap time he was busy swatting away flies. But there was a particularly pesky fly that the monkey just didn't seem to be able to get rid of. But it was a resourceful monkey and it went into problem solving mode. When the fly settled on the man's nose, the monkey picked up a rock and with one blow killed the fly. Now you've got to hand it to him - his method was effective, but it had associated problems because it deviated from the man's instructions.

In this chapter, God has some rather simple instructions on getting rid of habits of sin. But people who think they are wiser than God have deviated from these instructions and taken the short-cut of psychological therapy. As a result they have not had long-lasting help. And to make matters even more complicated, they have adjusted their theology to explain why it is normal for the Christian to stay in the helpless state of Romans chapter 7 (where Paul did the things that he didn't want to do) and they never make it into Romans chapter 8 (where Paul was successfully living by the Spirit and not by the flesh). Now Romans 7 is indeed talking about believers; but as Jay Adams points out, it is talking about believers who are immature and have not yet put off the old habits and put on the new habits of righteousness. The debate should not have centered around whether it is describing believers or unbelievers. Adams says that the real debate should center around whether it is describing immature Christians who have not yet overcome these habits of sin or whether it is describing mature Christians who have put off the sinful habits. Romans 7 is describing sin dwelling in our members (the parts of our bodies). That is not talking about sin as an infection. It is talking about sin as a habit – as an action that is so habitual that we do it without thinking. It's in our members in the sense that it is an automatic response of our nervous system. It's a habit. It is very tough to overcome a habit. But while it is not possible to become totally sinless, it is possible to overcome all your former

evil habits and to get to the place where you do your new righteous habits just as easily as you used to do the old ones. But the only way you will get there is if you follow God's pattern. The sermon today is a bare bones introduction. But hopefully it will give you enough information to give you hope for holiness. That's my goal – to fire you up with faith, and hope and enthusiasm.

I. The general principle for holiness

A. *The theology of hope: We can successfully overcome evil habits because:*

Let's start with the general principles. And I have divided these general principles up into two parts: 1) the theology of hope and 2) the actions of hope. Some of you may have given up hope of ever gaining victory over a besetting sin. And I would encourage you to read and re-read the book of Ephesians. Ephesians is such an encouraging book.

1. **We've got the Father on our side: the Father has chosen to save us, resource us and make us holy (chapter 1)**

In chapter 1 Paul tells us that we've got the Father on our side. He has predestined us not only to salvation, but verse 3 says that He **has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love...** The Father is on our side. He is rooting for you. He's got a plan for you. He's on your side.

2. **We've got the Son on our side: the Son has purchased everything we need for life and godliness with His blood (chapter 2)**

In chapter 2 Paul tells us that we've got the Son on our side. Paul says that His blood purchased **the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us...** What encouraging words. Verse 8 says that because of what Christ did we are saved by grace apart from works and the next verse says, **For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.** So the holiness that the Father planned before the foundation of the world, the Son purchased and has made available to us. He too is rooting for you. We've got God the Son on our side.

3. **We've got the Spirit on our side: the Spirit who indwells**

**us hates sin and desires to produce holiness within us
(3:14-4:16; see v. 30)**

Then chapter 3 tells us that we've got the Spirit on our side. He follows the Father's plan for holiness, and takes all the resources that the Son has purchased, and the Spirit then works those things in us as we claim them by faith. Verse 16 says, **that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man...** And as you keep reading Paul piles promise upon promise that God will do **exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that works in us.** I hope already that there is some glimmer of hope that is coming into your hearts. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are on your side to give you hope for holiness. You *can* get the victory. Praise God!

4. We've got the church on our side: the body was designed by God to help us to grow (4:1-16)

But there's one more aspect of this theology of hope, and that is that we've got the church on our side. We see that in chapter 4:1-16. I preached on that portion at length some months ago. God made the body to be part of the process of our growth so **that we should no longer be children** (v. 13) but should instead be a **body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.** And so Ephesians gives us a theology of hope for holiness.

B. The actions of hope: The general process (4:17ff)

1. Commit to walking the new walk (v. 17).

Paul's conclusion to this fantastic theology of hope is to call us to actions consistent with that hope. We do have a responsibility, and in verse 17 Paul says, **This I say, therefore** [there "therefore" is pointing back to all that he has discussed], **and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk...** The first responsibility you must take if you are to be holy is to believe the theology and make a commitment to stop walking like the world and to walk the new walk in Christ. There cannot be any rationalization, because if you are double minded, you lack faith. And if you lack faith, you will not be able to claim the resources that God has promised in the theology section.

Let me give you an example: My father knew a man in Canada who was always lamenting that he would fall into the temptation of watching an

X-rated movie at the movie theatre. And he said, “I can’t help it. It’s almost like there is this magnet drawing me into the theatre when I drive by.” And my father asked him, “Why are you driving by the movie theatre?” And he responded that he was traveling home from work. And my father asked, “Why do you take that route? Why don’t you drive home via this street? Then you won’t even be near the theatre.” And the man realized that he wasn’t totally committed to walking the new walk. He wanted to think he was fighting against sin, but he wanted to get close; to play near the edge. He hadn’t made a total commitment.

2. Commit to renewing your mind (vv. 17b-18 with 21-23) through meditation on Scripture and affirmation of Scripture.

The second part is that we must commit to renewing our minds through meditation on Scripture and affirmation of Scripture. Verses 17-18 describe the futility of the minds of unbelievers who embrace independent thinking and the darkening of their mind. They really don’t want to know the truth. In contrast, verses 21-23 say, **if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus...** Verse 23 says, **and be renewed in the spirit of your mind.** When I was 19 years old I struggled and struggled to gain purity of thought. My friends would tell me not to worry about it since no one can avoid lusting in their minds and no one can have pure dreams. But I didn’t want to settle for what others thought could be accomplished. I went to my pastor in Three Hills and he told me that I needed to have a renewed mind that would be capable of resisting temptation. He told me to start memorizing Scriptures that were the opposite of the sin I was struggling with. Once I had memorized them, to go over and over those Scriptures until I had sucked everything out of them that I could. It would wear down the old thought patterns and make me begin thinking God’s thoughts after Him. It would develop habits of thinking so that the moment a temptation would come, the Scriptures would kick in. He told me to pray those Scriptures, affirm those Scriptures as statements of faith, and to resist Satan and my flesh with those Scriptures. He told me to do like Christ did, and to say out loud, “Get behind me Satan, I will not think such thoughts because God’s Word says” and then to start quoting those Scriptures. I’ve mentioned to you in the past that when I started to do this, the temptations got worse. The pastor told me to persevere because Satan will test us to see whether we are weak and will give up. Eventually Satan will stop tempting us if we are consistent and persevere. And it did eventually work. My mind became pure during the day and eventually even

my dream life at night was cleaned up. I applied this renewing of the mind to conquer anger, fear, envy and other evils. And I found meditation on God's word to be a powerful tool to renew the mind and give me holiness. As we were driving to the wedding on Friday, Jonathan asked me if I knew why salvation was connected to the head in the spiritual armor. It is called, "the helmet of salvation." And of course, he knew the answer – salvation is not simply an experience. It is a doctrine to be believed. And even after we are justified, we continue to be saved from sin by first believing something. This is why Satan attacks the mind, and why we need the helmet. He knows the mind is key to undoing us. But God renews the mind to deliver us. Joshua 1:8 promises, **This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous and then you will have good success.** But some people think, "Oh, that's just too simple. How can meditating on the Word do that?" And this is where faith comes in. Believe God when He says that the renewing of your mind is powerful. Psalm 1 also promises success for holiness if we will renew our minds through meditation on Scripture. It tells us to stop educating ourselves in the world's way of thinking in verse 1, then in verse 2 it says, **But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.** What is the result? Blessing, prosperity, fruit, righteousness. Do not underestimate the power of prayerful meditation on Scripture. Paul told Timothy, **Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.**

3. Ask God to renew the sensitivity of your conscience (v. 19a).

Third step: as you renew your mind through meditation on Scripture and theology, ask God to renew the sensitivity of your conscience. Verse 19 describes the natural state of our hearts as **being past feeling...** After a while their consciences don't bother them any more. Too many people trust their consciences to be good. When they are confronted about a sin, they respond, "I don't feel convicted about that." And my response is, "Well, you should feel convicted. There's something wrong with your conscience when it is not troubled by something the Scripture clearly describes as sin." It should only be the reprobates who are past feeling. Ask Him to teach you and to make your conscience sensitive to the Spirit. I have an entire sermon series on developing a healthy conscience. That would be a conscience that is not guilty over things it shouldn't be guilty over, but a conscience that gets very guilty over the right things. But ultimately, it is to have a conscience

clear of offense every day. Paul said, **I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men** (Acts 24:16). It is a wonderful tool for holiness to have a conscience that won't let you step even one inch down the slippery slopes.

4. Look to God to overcome your weak will (v. 19b).

Next, look to God to overcome your weak will. Verse 19 describes unbelievers as giving up, but no Christian should ever give up on the battle against sin until they have gained the victory. If you have a weak will, give your will to God every day; sing the song "Take My Life And Let It Be" – especially the verse that says, "Take my will, and make it thine; it shall be no longer mind. Take my heart, it is thine own; it shall be thy royal throne." Use your emotions to strengthen your resolve. In fact, that's the whole point of verse 26 – get angry over sin. During my years when I struggled over some of my habits I would pound my fist into my hand and say, "No! I will not blaspheme God. I will not despise the riches of His grace. I will not given in!" Study the Biblical doctrine of motivations to help strengthen your will. But don't ever settle for the pagan description in verse 19 which says they **have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness**. What a sad state of affairs! Yet it is the state that many Christians find themselves in – weak-willed.

5. Ask Christ to lead you and teach you (vv. 20-21).

Fifth, ask Christ daily to lead you and teach you. Verses 20-21. **But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus**. Notice that it doesn't say, "have heard *about* Christ," but "if indeed you have heard *Him*." You need to be listening to Christ through the Scriptures. We can become very dull of hearing. Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Not everybody has spiritual ears, but even those who do still need to be told to hear. And notice also that it doesn't say "have been taught by His servants," but "have been taught by Him." If your heart desires to grow, He will open the Scriptures to you in a marvelous way. He will anoint you to know and be taught. But if you are ignoring His voice, He will stop speaking. 1 Thessalonians 4:9 says, **But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another**. God had already been teaching them through the Old Testament Scriptures, but they had turned off their hearing aids. They weren't listening. And sometimes people go to the pastor or to others because they want to justify doing something that the Spirit has already

convicted us that we shouldn't do. Jesus says of His new covenant people, **And they shall all be taught by God.**' (John 6:45). Too many people depend on man, when you have the Godhead ready and eager to teach you. 1 John 2:27 says, **But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.** Now that didn't stop John from teaching them, but it was John's reminder to them that part of their problem was that they weren't listening to Christ. You don't need another intermediary. Develop intimacy with Christ.

6. Dehabituation. Start saying, "No!" to your old identity with Adam ("the old man") (v. 22). This is putting off the old habits.

The sixth step is what Jay Adams speaks of as Dehabituation. That's just a fancy way of saying, "Putting off an old habit." You can't perfect your tennis playing if you don't work diligently to overcome the old bad habits. A habit is something that is so routine that you do it without thinking. And before you can begin successfully developing a new habit of behavior or thought, you have got to start saying, "No!" to your old identity with Adam. That's what the old man is – your old identity with Adam. So verse 22 says, **that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man...** I'll be giving you some examples in a couple minutes, but I'm just giving the general principle here.

7. Rehabilitation. Start saying, "Yes" to your new identity in Christ ("the new man") (v. 24). This is putting on the new habits.

The seventh action is rehabilitation. As you have probably guessed, that is the fancy word for developing a new habit. This is saying, "Yes" to your new identity in Christ. Verse 24 says, **and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.** Notice that the new man is already created, but it needs to be affirmed and consciously adopted. I gave you an example of putting off immoral thoughts and replacing them with Scripture. And I will give you some other examples in a moment of how to do that.

8. Be convinced that sins will indeed get worse if you don't conquer them ("grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" v. 22)

Eighth, be convinced that sins will indeed get worse and worse if you don't conquer them. Verse 22 describes **the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts**. It doesn't stay the same. It grows corrupt. And it does so in deceitful ways. It can sound so good on the surface, and yet it will take you down. So you can't believe the lies of Satan that this tiny little sin will taste sweet and not be a big deal. Sin is like a monster. If you starve it, it will grow weak, but if you feed it, it will become more and more your master. You've got to learn to hate sin and be convinced that it is always dangerous.

9. Be convinced that God will come through as you step out in faith ("created according to God" v. 24).

Ninth, be convinced that God will come through as you step out in faith. Verse 24 starts with our responsibility: **and that you put on the new man** but then the verse moves on to talk about God coming through: **which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness**. Any holiness created by us is fake. All true righteousness and holiness is created according to and by God. So that is the process. It may seem far less sophisticated than the psychological way. But ask yourself this: "How may Alcoholics Anonymous people every truly get over their problem?" None. They confess that once an alcoholic they are always an alcoholic. God's way is quite different. It is not fake holiness that tries to look good by avoiding the alcohol. The Biblical way conquers the addiction by God's grace. The Biblical way says, **such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God** (1 Cor. 6:11).

II. Examples of how this works

A. *Replace lying with honesty*

1. This involves resting in God's provision ("therefore")

Now let's quickly take the remainder of our time looking at two or three of Paul's examples of putting off the old man and putting on the new man. What does this look like? Verse 25 says, **Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another**. The first example Paul gives is to replace lying with honesty.

The word "therefore" points back to what we have gone through. We need to rest in God's provision.

2. This involves repentance and resolve (“putting away”)

But replacing lying with honesty also involves repentance and resolve of heart. That is found in the words **putting away**. Putting away is in the aorist tense, which means that it is a definitive once and for all determination that you are going to deal with this. It isn't half hearted. You're not just playing at soldiers. You have come to value God's hope for holiness so much and to hate what He hates so much that you are bound and determined to conquer it. If you have that attitude, you are well on your way. But if the only reason you want to stop lying is because you got caught and you are a little bit embarrassed, eventually your motivation will fail you.

3. This involves correctly identifying lying (“lying”)

Point 3 – if you are to truly put away lying, you are going to have to correctly identify lying. Some people are so accustomed to lying that they don't even know that they are lying.

Let me give you some examples of lying that Christians do all the time. Lying is not just committing perjury in court or telling your mom that you didn't take the cookie. It is also flattery (according to Romans 16:18) and some forms of joking. Proverbs 26:18-19 says, **Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death, is the man who deceives his neighbor, and says, “I was only joking.”** He says, You are like a madman when you do that. How many of you use that kind of humor? That trivializes truth. We should not tell an untruth even if it is a joke. Micah 6:11 treats cheating customers as a form of lying. Colossians 2:18,23 treats pretended humility as lying. Philippians 4:15-18 treats false motives as lying (“pretense”). Failing to keep your promises, unreliability, reneging on a contract are all forms of lying. Guy McGraw outlines some famous American fibs.

- The check is in the mail.
- I'll start my diet tomorrow.
- We service what we sell.
- Give me your number and the doctor will call you right back.
- Money cheerfully refunded.
- One size fits all.
- This offer limited to the first 100 people who call in.
- Your luggage isn't lost; it's only misplaced.
- Leave your resume and we'll keep it on file.
- This hurts me more than it hurts you.
- I just need five minutes of your time.

- Your table will be ready in a few minutes.
- Open wide, it won't hurt a bit
- Let's have lunch sometime.
- It's not the money; it's the principle.

Our culture is filled with lies. Now it is true that many of them are considered “white lies,” but they are lies. They are unworthy of a Christian. In the December 2006 edition of the *Journal of Human Values*, I was reading about a fascinating sting operation of the Port Authority of New York. I have no idea why they did the sting, but the Journal says, “They ran career-sized job advertisements in local newspapers with prospects for very good pay and benefits for electricians with proven mastery of the Sontag Connector. Despite the fact that no Sontag Connector ever existed, they were swamped with 170 applicants. All claimed familiarity with and even mastery of the Sontag Connector. Fifty-five applicants pushed the issue even further. They claimed to be certified or licensed Sontag experts. Of this bold 55, more than half claimed to have had 10 years or more expertise working on and with Sontag Connectors and, more often than not, provided a list of sites and projects chronicling their experience and adding realism to their fictitious resume. The management at Port Authority was confirmed in suspicion that resume doctoring was no small matter. It was not engaged in by a few bad apples, but revealed itself as a mainstream phenomenon.”¹

We need to evaluate our lives to see if we fudge the truth.

4. This involves deliberately developing habits of telling the truths that we would ordinarily want to hide (“speak the truth” = ongoing habit)

But Paul goes on. He doesn't just tell us to stop fibbing. He tells us to deliberately develop habits of telling the truth about the very issues we formerly lied about. We are to broadcast the very issues that we wanted to hide. He says in verse 25, **let each one speak truth with his neighbor**. The words “speak truth” are in the ongoing present tense. This is a habit of truth telling that Paul wants us to engage in.

So, taking the examples that we have looked at, if you were an applicant to the Port Authority desperately needing a good job, you would put on your application, “I have no experience in Sontag Connectors. In fact, I don't know what they are. But I am a quick learner and would love to learn this new gizmo.” Or if you already lied about it, you would go back to them

¹ Mark N. Wexler, “Conjectures on the Origins of Amorality in the Workplace,” in *Journal of Human Values*, Volume 12, #2 (2006), pp. 138-139.

and seek their forgiveness. If you were the one who said, “I was only joking,” but you really did intend it as a dig, humble yourself by going back and saying, “I am trying to learn truthfulness, and I want to say that I had intended the statement to be taken seriously, even though I worded it slightly in a humorous way so that I could cover my tracks. Please forgive me for lying.”

When I was growing up I had a habit of lying. And it was really hard to overcome. But doing the truth telling thing, as much as it sometimes felt like it would kill me, eventually helped me to conquer the habit. When I was in twelfth grade I cheated on my Trigonometry exam. That is a form of lying. And it bothered me for two years. I think I related to you another time how God finally made me miserable enough that I was willing to tell the truth. And boy was I nervous. I thought I might have to step down from College, that people would think poorly of me, etc. But I wrote to the High School and told them that I had cheated on the final exam, I knew that it was a great wickedness against God and against them, and that I was willing to take the math course over again, even though I was already in College. Since my lying was sometimes motivated by pride, I would humble myself by telling everyone what grade I got when I did poorly and not telling anyone my grade when I got an A. You do have to be careful about who you confide in. For example, it would not be a good thing to confess to the one that you lusted after that you lusted after him. Not a good thing. But if you have an accountability partner, you could confess such things that you are struggling with to hold yourself accountable for change. Telling the truth when you want to hide the truth will eventually destroy the inner impulse to lie.

5. This involves vulnerability of the body with each other (“let each one of you... for we are members of one another”)

But of course, this involves vulnerability to the body. This text says, “**for we are members of one another.**” He’s explaining why we ought not to be ashamed. If we truly are part of the same body, we shouldn’t have to put a façade on our face. We shouldn’t have to hide our true selves. This doesn’t mean that we have to wear our heart on our sleeve, but we ought to be much more open and vulnerable with each other. And if the whole body senses that we are for them and that we love them and that love will cover a multitude of sins, a liar will be much more likely to come to another brother in the church and ask for help.

I have seen many people who have taken these steps conquering their sinful habits of lying. And if you want more details, I have a little booklet on

the back table that has some specific steps. I can also give you counsel that digs a bit deeper. But this sermon is just designed to introduce you to the subject.

B. *Replace a careless attitude toward sin with righteous anger (vv. 26-27)*

The second example that Paul gives is to replace a careless attitude toward sin with righteous anger. There are many who misinterpret this verse as if it was a call to put off anger. Verse 31 does that. Verse 31 is a clear call to put off ungodly anger and other attitudes. But this verse commands us to have anger. **Be angry and do not sin.** This is addressing the sin of failing to get angry when we should. As Guy McGraw said, “We tolerate what we should be angry at and get angry at what we should tolerate. When was the last time you got mad about sin?” And I would add, when was the last time that you got mad at your own sin? Don’t take it out on others. Get rough with yourself. You are the one who has given place to the devil. You’re the one who has opened the gates to the enemy to march in. Take verse 27 seriously – don’t give place to the devil. Sin is so serious that we need to be upset about it. And notice that he’s not talking about anger at other people’s sins. That’s easy. He is saying that we should be angry at our own sin. You are the one who has had a lackadaisical attitude toward sin. Replace a careless attitude toward sin by telling yourself, “Phil, stop it. Stop thinking that way. I will not take my eyes off of Jesus.” This is what the Psalmist does in Psalm 42. He talks to himself. He says, **Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God**” (v. 11). Everything was going wrong, and he was being tempted to complain against God and give Satan a victory. But he caught himself up short and said, “Stop it. I’m not going to give in to this self-pity. I’m going to praise God and hope in God even though I don’t feel like it.” There’s much more I could say about righteous anger, which is an emotion that Jesus expressed. But there are times when we must be angry with ourselves.

C. *Replace stealing with hard work and generosity (v. 28)*

But for now, let me finish with one more example. Verse 28 says, **Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.** Jay Adam’s asks, “When is a thief no longer a thief?” Some might say that it is when he quits stealing. But how long does he have to have quit

stealing for you to know? A month? A year? What if his last heist was one million dollars? He may not need to steal for another three or four years, but still has a thief's heart. Or maybe the thief almost got caught last time, and it will take a couple months before he gets up the courage to steal again.

According to Paul, you know that a thief is no longer a thief when he is able by God's grace to do two things. And let me illustrate those two things by telling you about a counseling case that I had many years ago. I've taken a number of others through these steps, but I think this is safe enough to share because nobody knows this guy.

A guy came to me with two problems: Bulimia and what he called Kleptomania. Over the course of the past few years he had shoplifted hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of merchandise. He had seen many psychologists. And he wanted desperately to conquer his sin habits. First of all, we relabeled his sins the way the Bible does. I told him, you are not a kleptomaniac, you are a thief. It is not an illness, it is a sin. God doesn't guarantee you will be healed of all diseases, but He does guarantee that you can conquer this sin. So let's call it a sin.

We began a plan for how to tell the stores what he had stolen and how to pay off the stores. We dealt with spiritual warfare and there were some other Biblical steps that we gave to him. But at the heart of what we did, were the steps in these verses.

In this verse Paul reinforces a lifestyle that takes away the motivations for theft. He was getting behind the sin and showing what can be done to weaken the motivations. One motivation is laziness (wanting something for nothing). Another motivation for thieves is greed (not being satisfied). Another motivation is covetousness (wanting what someone else has). And all of those motivations are eroded and eventually broken down when a habit such as Paul recommends is developed.

And there were two steps to Paul's plan here: 1) a certain kind of labor and 2) a certain kind of giving. First, the labor. Paul says, "**but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good.**" The word for labor (*kapiao*) is a word that means strenuous labor that produces fatigue (cf. Foulkes p. 134). It's a sweaty difficult labor. And to make sure that we do not miss the point Paul says, "**working with his hands that which is good.**"

The second part of the equation is giving away to those who have need the very things that you have labored to gain. Not giving away something you have stolen. That is too easy. Instead, it is giving away something you value because you have worked to hard to gain it.

I asked the young man what job he found to be the most distasteful and difficult for him to do. He immediately said that it was mowing the yard.

His wife agreed. So I told him, “Every time you are so much as tempted to steal something from a store, I want you to go to your neighbors and friends and mow their yards until you have earned up enough money to buy the merchandise you wanted to steal. If you need the names of other people whose lawns you can mow, I can provide those. The whole time you are mowing, meditate upon the Scriptures that I have given you to memorize, and pray that God would quicken those Scriptures to your heart. Thank God for the work, thank him for the privilege of giving to the needy, and pray to God to give you a hatred for stealing and a love for giving. Then once you have the money, go to the store, buy the merchandise, and give the merchandise away to a needy person.” Oh, my. You would have thought that I had asked him to jump off the Empire State Building. Every time he did this it felt like something was dying on the inside. He had to do this a number of times, but he reported that the homework was finally giving to him a new appreciation for labor, a new hatred for stealing and a new compassion for the needy. I won’t share how he overcame his Bulimia, but for the first time in this man’s life, he gained complete victory over laziness, greed, covetousness and theft. Having conquered those seemingly impossible habits, he now had renewed hope for holiness and zeal for holiness.

This is the same zeal that I desire for each of you. You’ve got the whole Trinity on your side. You’ve got this body who is willing to help you through it. And you now know (at least in a very rudimentary fashion) some of the steps that you need to take.

This is as far as we will go this week, but I want to end by encouraging you to boldly tackle every fortress that Satan has erected in your life. Every one of those fortresses can fall to the grace of King Jesus. And He is greatly glorified by your conquests over the flesh. Don’t get discouraged. Have hope for your holiness. Amen.

[To be continued next week]

- D. *Replace corrupt speech with good speech generated by the Spirit (vv. 29-30)***
- E. *Replace destructive attitudes with gracious attitudes (vv. 31-32)***